of the things I will spend time on in the Senate.

***RUSA:* Do you agree that there is a role for the federal government in guiding the business community—at least with some incentives?**

Kerrey: I'd rather have the business community guide the federal government, not the other way around—especially when it comes to small businesses. We know what small businesses oppose, but I think it's their role to come forward with innovative proposals that can benefit them.

I do not mean to imply that restaurants or small-business people are reactionary. But particularly on such items as the cost of health care or capital, small businesses ought to take a very aggressive, affirmative stance. When it comes to the cost of capital, we are the ones who are going to get clobbered by high interest rates. The big guys aren't. The nation's high rate of borrowing means that eventually we'll take a hit.

***RUSA:* Do you foresee any further attempts to cut the business-meal deduction to raise money?**

Kerrey: Yes, I do—because it's not necessarily what people would define as a "tax increase." Some still think of it as a loophole. You've got a friend in me on that issue.

***RUSA:* What about tip compliance? Congress doesn't define that as a tax increase either, and IRS feels it is getting only about half of what it should.**

Kerrey: I think Congress and the IRS should feel they're getting enough compliance on tip taxes. I don't think we need another couple hundred thousand pounds of paperwork to figure out how to get every last nickel and dime out of people who are getting tips. If you're going to do that, you ought to begin with trying to get taxes on *all* extra income—not just on tips in restaurants.

***RUSA:* What do you think the industry's image is on Capitol Hill?**

Kerrey: I think it's excellent. As individuals, restaurateurs have a lot of strength. Part of this is simply that they have so much practical experience with regulation. For a legislator, there is nothing like talking to a person who actually writes the checks, hires the workers and deals with all kinds of other people.

Restaurateurs should trust their instincts on the substance of issues. What knocks people out is when someone comes into a congressional office and says, "I'm worried about my employees. They are uninsured, and we've got to do something about it." Or "Here's why I think mandated benefits stink." Or "I'm worried about the caliber of kids coming in to apply for jobs. I'm worried about our schools and I want to help improve education."

There's also a romantic element to restaurants. Almost everyone has had some sort of special experience in a restaurant. There's a magic there that gives the owner-operator of a restaurant some influence.

I think the industry's importance is fairly well understood. Still, it's worth explaining time and time again how a typical restaurant will hire someone who starts off as a busboy and ends up as president. That's very, very positive. ⌟

DC ROUNDUP

□ **Veto expected on minimum-wage legislation.** Defying President Bush's veto promise, both chambers of Congress have signed off on legislation to raise the minimum wage to $4.53 an hour by October 1, 1991, and to establish a 60-day training wage for new job-holders. President Bush has vowed to veto any bill that goes higher than $4.25 and does not contain a six-month training wage for all new hires.

Pro-wage-hike forces in Congress are likely to fall short of the votes they would need to override a veto, thus sending the issue back to square one. Most observers agree that Democrats will not wait long before trying again to get another bill to the President.

□ **Minimum-health-insurance proposal reintroduced.** Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) have reintroduced legislation that would require all employers to offer health benefits to most employees who work more than 17½ hours a week and to their dependents.

Under S. 768 and H.R. 1835, introduced April 12, employers would be required to offer a health-insurance plan that covers a wide range of medical services and that caps family deductibles at $500 yearly and individual deductibles at $250. In most cases, employers would be responsible for covering 80 percent of the premium costs. Hearings have not yet been scheduled.

□ **Senate labor panel okays mandated-leave bill.** The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee voted 10 to 6 on April 19 to require businesses with 20 or more employees to grant workers up to 10 weeks of parental leave every two years, as well as 13 weeks of annual medical leave for employees with serious illnesses. Under S. 345, employers would also be required to continue health-insurance coverage for employees on leave.

The committee's vote is a green light to House Democrats, who have been reluctant to schedule a House floor vote on the legislation without a guarantee that senators are also willing to take action.

□ **Rostenkowski proposes simplifying Section 89.** Under intense pressure from the hundreds of U.S. representatives who are urging outright repeal of Section 89 requirements, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL) introduced a bill in April to completely revamp and simplify the cumbersome employee-benefits law. Section 89, which requires employers to run a series of complicated tests on benefit plans to see if the plans discriminate in favor of higher-paid workers, has come under heavy fire for the burdens it imposes on employers, especially small businesses.

—Denise Roach

FEEDBACK

Kudos

Dear Editor:

Your story on the natural science of keeping chefs was terrific and was a clear indication of the extraordinary improvement of the magazine.

Congratulations and best wishes.

—George Lang
The George Lang Corporation
New York, NY

I really enjoyed your piece "Holding Onto Your Chef" in ***Restaurants USA.*** It's nice to know that there are many other professionals who want to take good care of their chefs.

—Clark Wolf
New York, NY

It's Show time!

It's Show time! Once again we await the arrival of May to take our annual trek to the Windy City to enjoy another restaurant show. Each year we see new and interesting things and buy several items to help us become a better operation or save on our labor costs. Some of the new items are winners—some have proven not so good.

Last year was a particularly good year for us. The first and most important thing we did was to become a member of the National Restaurant Association. We joined at the membership booth.

The very first mailing we received from the association gave us some leads for a grandparents' day promotion. We not only did it for grandparents' day, but we also made a grandparents' week promo. We ran a full-page ad in the local paper, giving all grandparents dinners at prices even some of them were too young to remember (shrimp, $2.95; New York strip steak, $2.95; fish, $1.95; and lobster, $4.95).

We had a drawing for a Bahamas cruise for two and had more than 2,500 entries in the drawing book—this gave us a great mailing list. We served more than 1,000 grandparents a day during the promo. To prove they were grandparents, they had to show us a picture of their grandchildren.

One of the new pieces of equipment we bought at last year's Show was a conveyor oven (we love it and are doing an average of 1,200 broiled seafood entrees per day). Being an all-you-can-eat house, sometimes we serve four to six plates for one dinner. We purchased an energy-saving pot-and-pan washer, too. We use it to wash our serving trays (it's already paid for itself in labor saved).

We also bought a ware washer. Absolutely every restaurant needs this piece of equipment! Dinnerware is sparkling clean—spotless with such ease and great speed. It's also more than paid for itself in time-savings while giving us the cleanest flatware possible.

And we bought an electric donut hole machine. Folks, we used to have one fry cook who did nothing but squeeze out corn fritters with an ice cream dipper. We bought the dippers by the case because we wore them out so fast (each customer gets a basket of fritters—an average day for us is 4,000 to 5,000 fritters!). That poor guy developed "fritter hand"—a numbing sensation all the way up the arm to the shoulder. We had to rotate the job.

Now we fill two fry vats in less than two minutes, and my cooks fight to get on that line. This machine paid for itself in the first two months, in production time and labor savings.

—Rodney S. Thompson
President/Owner
Dixie Crossroads, Inc.
Titusville, FL

Domino's delivers security information

We read your publication with great interest and wanted to pass along a couple of items for your information:

(1) We read the article headlined "How Am I Doing, Boss?" by Joan E. Herlong. Related to the subject, we at Domino's Pizza use a system called "Job Performance and Review" or "JP&R." Each corporate employee does a JP&R with his or her supervisor.

(2) We at Domino's Pizza spend much time and money on pizza-store security. Recently, we published a special edition of our in-house newspaper, *The Pepperoni Press*, on security. Since security is a subject important to many fast food companies, we are making this publication available to any National Restaurant Association member, free for the asking.

Once again, we enjoy your publication; keep up the good work!

—Ronald A. Hingst,
National Director of Public Relations, Domino's Pizza, Inc., Ann Arbor, MI

More on training, please

As the new director of training for a regional contract foodservice company, I am using your magazine as an important resource in our training efforts. The format and content are most helpful to many people on staff who want to keep abreast of the latest market information.

Yet, as a professional training manager who is new to the foodservice industry, I am surprised by the paucity of printed information/material on training topics. It would seem appropriate that an industry that is so strongly impacted by demographic surges and lack of trained, experienced manpower would also have multiple forums for exchanging ideas-techniques-suggestions on the specific topic of employee education and training. Have I overlooked resources? Is your magazine considering a regular column to address this timely topic?

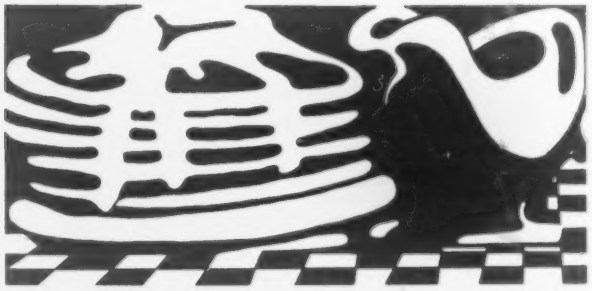
I look forward to your response and in the interim will continue to use the many other benefits available in ***Restaurants USA.***

—Robert W. Soter
Director of Training
The Wood Company
Allentown, PA

Editor's note: *Look for an article on training as part of our "Year of the Employee" series.*

South Royalton, VT

Sweet treats from New England



At the Vermont Sugar House, a 40-seat home-style restaurant in South Royalton, Vermont, things are a little busier than usual every March and April. Sure, the restaurant continues to serve its hearty New England breakfasts, with stacks of buttermilk pancakes that—according to co-owner Bruce Morse—"roll over the edge of the plate and make you wonder where you're going to put the syrup." But in "sugar season," the owners and staff are also busy collecting sap and producing the syrup that will dress the pancakes and form the basis for an assortment of signature products—from fudge to maple cream—a spread for toast.

"There's something special that happens when you roll real maple syrup around your mouth," says Morse, whose "sugarbushes" produce around 1,500 gallons of syrup each year (a fraction of his supply). "Your taste buds wake up. Like wine, pure maple syrup has a bouquet that fills the mouth." And as a substitute for cooking sweeteners, maple syrup's uses are virtually unlimited, especially on the dessert menu. In addition to a nationally known maple pecan pie, after-dinner choices include maple yogurt, maple sundaes and maple milkshakes.

—David Shaler

Detroit, MI

Cutting attrition with tuition

In Detroit, the owner of two Burger King franchises is finding that college really is a worthwhile investment. By paying employees' college tuition, Herb Schervirsh says he has dramatically lowered turnover, tardiness and absenteeism.

Schervirsh began his program two years ago, when he paid $10,000 up front for employees' tuition and other costs at a local community college. Since then, the program has been fine-tuned with the help of a third-party administrator, which has reduced Schervirsh's costs.

Schervirsh pays 100 percent of the tuition for those who qualify for the program. Employees who work 20 hours each week, for example, are allowed to take two courses per semester. By limiting the number of classes offered, Schervirsh hopes to teach students both "how to go to school and how to work."

Researchers at California State University-Fullerton who have studied Schervirsh's program determined that his workers who are attending college showed a 58 percent turnover rate, versus a 240 percent turnover rate for the other workers.

Orlando, FL

Traveling light

Guests at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida, are traveling lighter these days, thanks to a new selection of healthy dishes on the menus at the hotel's coffee shop and formal dining room.

"It's a common complaint that it's hard to stay in shape while on the road," says general manager Alfred Matter. "So to help out calorie-conscious business travelers, we added several low-fat, low-calorie, low-sodium and low-cholesterol dishes to our breakfast, lunch and dinner menus." The dishes were developed by food and beverage director Henri Haber with the help of a dietitian at Orlando Regional Medical Center.

Because a list of the calories, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium content for each dish is printed on the menu, guests on special diets can easily keep track of what they are eating.

But the new menu item with perhaps the best waist-trimming potential, says Haber, is the *"better than cheesecake"* dessert, a non-dairy item that has no cholesterol and no butterfat.

Minneapolis, MN

When half is better than the whole

With its pickled white-oak furnishings, carpeted dining room and tables set with linen napkins and green Spanish glassware, Patti's Restaurant & Bar, located in the Minneapolis suburb of Golden Valley, has a decor that reflects comfort and relaxation. However, the showpiece of the seven-month-old restaurant is the large (approximately 1,800 square feet) pastel painting on the 30-foot-high ceiling of the dining room. The predominantly blue-green seascape seems only half there; it stops at a jagged line, and then the ceiling drops a foot. The effect suggests archaeologists had chipped away a plain plaster ceiling to reveal the painting underneath. "We tell our customers that someday we will push back the crack to let them see the rest of the ceiling," jokes owner Patti Soskin.

The crack motif was deliberate and not an attempt to cover up a mistake in construction. The motif appears throughout the restaurant. The bar has a similar bi-level ceiling, but no painting; and the bar floor has a crack inlaid with copper. A full-color photograph of the ceiling adorns Patti's menu, business cards and other printed material.

When local artist Leon Hushcha finished the ceiling, he gathered the restaurant's staff and spent an hour-and-a-half fielding questions, so that they in turn could answer customers' questions about the design.

—Julie Fintel

THUMBS UP

Restaurant Critics Take the Floor

by Gary Stern

When one character in Samuel Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot" is spewing out denunciations at another, he finally levels him with the worst possible invective: critic. To some restaurateurs, especially those whose restaurants have been zapped by a piercing review, critics may be the scourge of the earth. But savvy restaurateurs have learned that restaurant reviews can generate business, by spawning word-of-mouth recommendations for their establishments, by calling attention to and raising the reputation of their chefs, by pointing out their restaurants' unusual dishes and appealing decor, and by distinguishing them from their many competitors.

But what goes on inside the mind of a restaurant critic? What do restaurant reviewers look for? How do they judge restaurants? And what advice do restaurant critics have for restaurant owners? ***Restaurants USA*** interviewed the restaurant critics of the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*, as well as syndicated food critics, to present an insider's perspective on these topics.

No ready-made checklist

Not surprisingly, the restaurant critics said there is no simplistic checklist on which they rely. Every restaurant must be judged on its own terms, says Phyllis Richman, restaurant critic for the *Washington Post*. "I wouldn't review a mass-production, low-price restaurant in the same way that I would review a high-priced, elegant, specialty restaurant," she points out.

The *Los Angeles Times* restaurant editor and critic Ruth Reichl agrees, stating that "Haute cuisine restaurants can't be judged by the same standards as a hot-dog stand. You judge a restaurant on its own pretensions."

John Mariani, who for the last dozen years has been a food writer, reviews regularly for *USA Today* and writes *Esquire's* "50 Best Restaurants Across America" feature annually, says, "It goes without saying that things should be fresh; but many, many chefs make a big deal of using fresh ingredients, which to me is just the definition of cooking. Beyond that, whether it's fried chicken, steak, the most complex Italian sauce or Indian curry, the main ingredient, the taste, has to come through."

It finally happened. I nearly lost my long-suffering dining-out companion to a young opera singer, a mezzo-soprano with a lilting, nuance-filled voice and an off-the-shoulder peasant blouse.

We were eating pasta, indifferent but nicely served, at the new Bella Voce restaurant, where the Brasserie used to be, in the basement of the Fairmont Hotel. Music was expanding all around us—from a grand piano and a troupe of opera-singing waiters and waitresses who were holding forth all over the dining room in duets, trios and solos. One of our servers was the comely Christine Lloyd, who sang so movingly right into my dining companion's eyes, that he dropped his fork and cried. You never know what will happen in restaurants these days . . . .

—Patricia Unterman

. . . As you expect at noisy, densely packed Italian restaurants, the prices are low, the portions are large and the food is at least okay. Some of it is far better than okay, and a couple of dishes are worth the trip from other neighborhoods . . .

Taking into consideration the prices—$6 tops for appetizers, most pastas around $5 and main dishes mostly $7 to $10—even the mediocre dishes are good values. But you need not settle for mediocrity. Among the appetizers, sauteed mushrooms is a platterful of earthiness in a haze of garlic. The sliced fresh mushrooms are well browned and simply wonderful. White beans, cooked with onions, are no less excellent, but beans have fewer fans than mushrooms . . . .

—Phyllis Richman

If you are anywhere near Chicago and feel in the mood for blowing out all the stops and dining as lavishly as any nobleman of the *ancien regime*, make the 40-minute drive to suburban Wheeling, settle yourself behind a banquette at Le Francais and try not to gape as the extravagant dishes pass before your eyes—terrines and pates and mousses of exceptional richness, a galette of crab with mustard sauce, lobster au gratin with sauce Nantua and basil, tenderly cooked red snapper in an herbed beurre blanc, rare squab and sweetbreads in vividly reduced pan juices, sorbets the color of purple velvet and desserts set in fragile layers of puff pastry decorated with spun sugar . . . .

—John Mariani

Patricia Unterman of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, one of the only restaurant critics nationwide who is also a restaurateur," says she bases her reviews on the food's freshness, the quality of ingredients, the preparation style, the meal's aesthetics (how it looks on the plate) and, last, creativity.

While critics concentrate primarily on the quality of the food in their reviews, they are the first to acknowledge that more and more readers dine out for reasons other than food. When friends or readers call Reichl at the *Los Angeles Times* to ask where to dine out for a celebration or an evening out, "The food is almost always the last thing mentioned," she says. In Los Angeles, many people dine out every night, so location, pricing and how long the meal takes play pivotal roles in choosing a restaurant. Her reviews consider all of these factors.

A star system

While all critics acknowledge the subjectivity of their reviews, some of them try to objectivize their reviews by creating a star system, somewhat like the *Michelin Guide*'s approach. Bryan Miller, the *New York Times*' restaurant critic, says critic Craig Claiborne developed the star system—from zero to four stars—in the 1960s. Eighty percent of the review is based on the food's quality, and the other 20 percent breaks down into ambience and service. "By nature, we're critics, so we're not objective," Miller acknowledges. The stars, he suggests, are intended as a visual clue at the top of the review that can help readers grasp the review's essence. The stars force the critic to get to the point: Did you like the restaurant or not? Miller notes that "The stars are the most difficult and agonizing part of my job, because they're very important."

Reichl, at the *Los Angeles Times*, rejects using any version of the star system. "I hate that because I think it's pretending that there's some kind of really objective criteria for restaurants, and there isn't. It's a very subjective experience; it changes from visit to visit," she says. How can you assign stars and easily compare reviewing simple Italian food, elegant French food, Cajun food, Tex-Mex food, Indian food, etc.?" she asks.

Acknowledging that restaurant reviewing is a highly subjective art, critics Michael and Jane Stern, syndicated columnists and *New Yorker* writers, ask themselves one basic question after they leave a restaurant: Do we leave the restaurant feeling good? "Contained in that simplistic answer," Michael Stern says, "is a whole galaxy of elements, the food being only one element." The Sterns, who cover restaurants throughout the United States and who have much more latitude than a newspaper critic who covers only one city or area, are most interested in discovering restaurants where the food captures the feeling of a region or area.

"Maybe I need glasses," said the Reluctant Gourmet. "I'm sure I must need glasses. I'd swear that it says, right here on the menu, that a dish of ice cream costs $12."

"It does," I said. The Reluctant Gourmet winced. He looked around the gilded garden, with its modern art, its flowers, its *koi* (carp) swimming merrily around. He looked up, past the tall heaters, beyond the tented top, to the moon hanging in the sky. He sipped his Evian. "I wonder how much this water costs," he murmured to himself.

I was to happy to enlighten him. "Ten dollars a bottle . . . ."

—Ruth Reichl

One question often posed to a restaurant critic is, "What is the difference between a three-star and a four-star restaurant?" Indeed, it is a fine distinction. A succinct explanation would be: a three-star establishment must excel; a four-star must excel *and* inspire. Le Bernardin, the all-seafood restaurant that received four stars in 1986 shortly after it opened, is a paradigm of a restaurant that does both.

Le Bernardin's near-fanatical regard for fresh seafood and its revolutionary style of preparation—at least in this country—have been emulated from coast to coast. Even home chefs, who for generations followed the credo "cook fish until it flakes," are now serving rare-pink tuna steaks at backyard barbecues. Rarely has a restaurant had such a pervasive influence on a nation's cuisine . . . .

—Bryan Miller

Mary Mac's is a model of modern eat-and-run efficiency that serves some of the best old-fangled Southern cooking in the state of Georgia. It is one of two restaurants we know where you can get the Dixie soul soup called pot likker, a virile spruce-green brew dredged from the bottom of the pot after greens are cooked with a cracked hambone. Pot likker is strong stuff: a brew to make you feel like Popeye the Sailor.

With hot corn muffins on the side (pot likker is always served with cornbread), a bowl of Mary Mac's pot likker is practically a health-food meal in itself. But we'd recommend you get only a cup. There are about 20 other great dishes on Mary Mac's menu that deserve a try . . . .

—Michael and Jane Stern

THUMBS DOWN

THUMBS UP

Service: a key influence

The quality of the restaurant's service influences every critic's review. Reichl, who has written a cookbook, owned the Swallow restaurant in Berkeley and served as restaurant critic for *New West* magazine, looks for service that "is unobtrusive and that anticipates your every need. If you're very aware of the service, it's not good. The waiter should not give you any suggestions unless you ask for them. The last thing I want to hear is: 'Oh, good choice.' "

No matter whether the restaurant has garnered four-stars or is a little hole-in-the-wall, Unterman expects waiters to understand the menu and the food and exactly what the kitchen is making that night. She'd like to see waiters who are "helpful, enthusiastic and not intrusive."

Design: a factor

Diners often choose a restaurant not only for its food but also because of its ambience and design. Bryan Miller says, "Restaurants have taken on a quasi-entertainment role for social and business functions, and to some extent, a social-status function. People want to know if it's comfortable." That is why his reviews describe the decor and setting.

. . . That Le Cirque is the most glamorous and electrifying setting in New York goes without saying. Not the room particularly, a brightly lighted, tightly cramped rococo den with its zany monkey murals and peculiar bouquet sconces that could have come from the suburban lawn-and-garden center. Le Cirque's unparalleled spirit springs from the staff and customers who fill it. On any evening the celebrity scorecard overflows. There may be Lee Iacocca holding court over a veal chop, Paul Bocuse and Roger Verge sampling everything on the menu, the King of Spain and his retinue marveling at the wine list, Mick Jagger trying to look comfortable—and all, amazingly, appearing inconspicuous among the glittering colony of habitues . . . .

—Bryan Miller

Critics are also paying more and more attention to a restaurant's noise level, which Miller says has become his readers' number-one complaint. Although many restaurants in New York City seem to think din is synonymous with joie de vivre and liveliness, he suggests that "noise can ruin a dining experience." Usually he will describe the noise level in a review, but noise rarely affects a restaurant's star ratings.

Miller is not alone. Reviewers from coast to coast know that how a restaurant looks—and feels—is important to today's diners. And they almost always include this information in their reviews.

. . . Walk in the door and you can hardly stop yourself from saying, "What a charming room." And it keeps on being charming—past the slinky, inviting bar; past the banquettes covered in beautiful fabric; and on into the dining room with its large windows, patterned rug and beamed ceiling.

Go up the stairs, where there's a room with a fireplace and an outside terrace, and the charm is unabated. With its low lights and wall sculptures, it is all terribly, terribly tasteful—and just a little bit anonymous. It's like the pictures of rich people's houses that you see in shelter magazines: You can't help feeling that in his heart the decorator really believes that the presence of people ruins his rooms . . . .

—Ruth Reichl

At least one critic, however, thinks too much attention is paid to a restaurant's design. Mariani compares the restaurant critic to the Broadway theater critic. Audiences flock to musicals these days for the special effects, while the critics search for the hummable song, the believable characters, the melody. Similarly, he says restaurant critics are in search of the perfect meal, not the perfect banister, chandelier or banquette.

. . . Provencal cuisine grows out of the same climate and casual approach to living as does California cuisine, but [Jean-Pierre] Bosc's cooking strongly shows how contrived a lot of California cooking has become in recent years and how badly a correction of taste was needed. His food is as flavorful as its ingredients are ripe, sweet, and luxuriant, from the cold vegetable, fennel and basil soup called pistou to the zucchini flowers with eggplant, mushrooms, tomatoes, olives and basil sauce. His presentations of dishes like crabmeat-and-vegetable salad are sensible yet beautiful, while his minute steak with black olives and mashed potatoes or squab with cabbage shows that good taste always triumphs over mere novelty. There is some daring here, too—though fresh salmon layered over salmon eggs and onions was a tad strong. And his desserts are all knockouts, especially the hot chocolate tart with pistachio sauce—unequivocally the best sweet I've had all year.

Though rather flat in decor, Fennel has all the spice it needs, right on its menu. And it puts into perspective many of the eccentricities of California cuisine.

—John Mariani

Why and how they do it

In analyzing the food and sizing up the service, critics are trying to guide the consumer. "We are trying to inform the consumer of what he is likely to find" and what he can obtain for his money, says the *Washington Post's* Phyllis Richman. She adds that restaurant critics perform in many other significant roles, such as educating the consumer about food, educating the restaurateur, being an advocate for the art of cooking and restaurateuring.

. . . Bistro Bistro is a benchmark of the emerging American restaurant (actually, it's more fun than that sounds). Caraluzzi has a history of figuring out what diners—particularly young diners—want and giving a little better. Here he has done that once again, providing:

Luxury with a touch of fun: **Bistro Bistro is a wide-open space lavished with arches and painted in soft colors. Stretching for probably half a block is a mural with details from the Sistine Chapel ceiling interspersed with bacchanalian touches. Indirect lighting creates a rosy glow, and a second mural draws attention to the pastry case filled with creamy, sugary baubles.**

Sophistication without having to dress up for it: **Bistro Bistro looks as if no budget restrained its creation. But lest this all seem too grand, waiters are in shirtsleeves, and around the room are baskets of paper tablecloths to freshly cover tables as they turn over, the way real bistros do. Diners here would feel as appropriate sipping a Kendall-Jackson cabernet (at bargain prices) and eating a T-bone steak (also modestly priced) in jeans as they would in a three-piece suit . . . .**

—Phyllis Richman

Patricia Unterman takes a more sociological approach in her reviews. Every restaurant, she says, has its own story to unfold about the people who go there, the way the restaurant developed, how the restaurant fits into the city's ethos and how the owner came to open it. She tries to incorporate this information into her review.

. . . We've come a long way from the modest little noodle house and Cantonese/American restaurants of Chinatown in just three years. Major restaurants from Hong Kong have opened lavish branches on the Peninsula, in the East Bay and in San Francisco. Their menus are huge, their kitchens are able to turn out complicated banquet food as well as home-style cooking; their service is fast but attentive; their dining rooms are bustling and noisy, but also clean and comfortable.

Restaurants of this scale and accomplishment reflect the demands of the larger, more affluent Chinese community in the Bay area. But I think the Hong Kong owners also are after an ever-growing clientele of nonAsians who are cultivating palates for more exotic cuisines. Wu Kong, like Yank Sing and Harbor Village, has chosen a location that draws on the cultural mix of the Financial District during the day, but it has to bring diners downtown at night . . . .

—Patricia Unterman

Most restaurant critics will base their main review on two to four visits. Critics pay for their own meals, try to maintain anonymity by not making reservations in their own names, use credit cards with several names and often dine with parties of four to six people to taste as many dishes as possible.

Restaurant critics have varied approaches to how they decide on which eatery to spotlight. The *Washington Post's* Richman, for example, is influenced to review a restaurant by several factors, including hearing about restaurants from her regional critics, driving around and spotting a new restaurant, spotting ads in newspapers and magazines and reading press releases.

Handwritten notes from restaurateurs that explain their eatery's reason-for-being will get attention from some critics. A menu that looks out-of-the ordinary can spark attention as well. And some critics follow a chef from one restaurant to the next.

. . . The only truly elegant restaurant to open this season was Champagne, a superlative dining room owned by chef Patrick Healy and his wife Sophie. I'd last eaten Healy's food at Colette in the Beverly Pavillion Hotel and am very happy to see him alight in his own place.

. . . He's got a terrific palate and his dishes are well thought through and not in the least trendy . . . .

—John Mariani

THUMBS DOWN

THUMBS UP

Michael Stern relies on readers' tips. How else would the Sterns have heard about Gladys Breeden's cafe in Sevierville, Tennessee, which happens to be located directly in Ms. Breeden's kitchen?

Pet peeves

Having reviewed hundreds of restaurants over the years, each critic has his or her own pet peeve about what restaurateurs should avoid. Don't be tacky by offering the critic a free bottle of wine or offering to rip up the check, says Reichl. "We have expense accounts. It's embarrassing when they do that."

Critic Bryan Miller asks that servers not ask diners whether they want fresh pepper or cheese on their dishes. "How do we know if we haven't tasted the dish yet?" he wonders. "If the dish requires pepper, why didn't the chef add it himself?"

Miller thinks that many restaurants have menus that overextend their kitchens. "The American attitude," he points out, "is people need 13 or 14 entrees, when the kitchens can barely put out six different ones. I'd rather see six good dishes than a dozen mediocre ones."

"Be honest" is the main advice of Phyllis Richman. Recently she dined in a restaurant that publicized its fresh hearts of palm and homemade caviar, neither of which lived up to the promise.

> **. . . So up-to-date is this new Italian restaurant that the menu lists "Risotto of the hour." But when I asked the waiter what that risotto was, he answered, "Rice." That about sums up [the restaurant]. It promises risotto, it serves rice . . . .**
>
> ***—Phyllis Richman***

"Avoid pretentious service," admonishes Michael Stern. What is it about the town and its food that makes it unique is the question he'd like a restaurateur to answer. He'd like the food served, the music on the jukebox and the accent of the waiter/waitress all to reflect the region. He is most vexed by restaurants that try too hard to be something they're not. A recent trip to a New York City restaurant where the waiters wore cowboy boots and jeans and spoke with affected phony accents, and where he was served "lousy" fried chicken and "watery" mashed potatoes, made him lose his patience.

Mariani urges restaurateurs "to avoid the pitfalls of trendiness." Blackened redfish and California pizza with goat cheese may be trendy for a while, but the restaurant will probably not manage to finish out a three-year lease. Fads come and go as quickly in restaurants as they do in fashion, he says.

> **. . . The food at Pazzia is not just *close* to the best you'll find in trattorias in Italy; it is *exactly* what you recall from your favorite restaurants in Florence, Milan and Rome, and the food has the precise flavors you thought could never be reproduced this side of the Atlantic. Mauro [Vincenti] loves nothing better than trying to educate his clientele, who seem to have no problem lapping up an old traditional dish like *pappa al pomodoro*—a reduction of cooked tomatoes, olive oil, bread and basil—or a bowl of pappardelle with rabbit and porcini mushrooms . . .**
>
> ***—John Mariani***

Mariani is also irritated by restaurants that always give the best tables to smokers and shove nonsmokers into back tables near the kitchen. "Restaurateurs underestimate the opposition to smokers," he says. Last, he advises against oral recitations. By the time a server has informed diners of three soups, two appetizers and six entrees, the customer has forgotten the dishes. Printing the evening's specials and inserting them inside the menu is preferable, he suggests.

Although the interviewed critics said that they've written their share of reviews of "bad" restaurants, most derive pleasure from discovering that out-of-the-way restaurant that nobody knows about that is serving unusual and tasty food.

> **. . . Eddie's is the mythical great undiscovered hole-in-the-wall. In fact, when you finally find Law Street and locate 2119, you will be sure it is mythical. Where is everybody?**
>
> **Look closely. There's the sign: Eddie's: Home of New Orleans Cooking. Yes, Eddie's is real. There is nothing more real than the red beans and rice Eddie makes—each bean a small pillow of creamy silk sitting atop the rice, which is fluffy enough to absorb the soulful garlicky flavor of this perfectly seasoned dish. New Orleanians make a big deal out of red beans and rice, a passion out-of-towners find difficult to fathom. Eddie's version turns skeptics into believers . . . .**
>
> ***—Jane and Michael Stern***

**Patricia Unterman, of the* San Francisco Chronicle, *has managed to avoid conflict of interest during her decade as reviewer by refusing to review any restaurant in the immediate area of the Civic Center where her successful seafood restaurant Hayes Street Grill is located; and she won't review seafood restaurants anywhere in San Francisco.*

Gary Stern is a freelance writer in New York City.

THUMBS DOWN

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

TURN COMPLAINTS INTO GOLD

Nobody wants him. Everybody tries to avoid or ignore him. Yet he is one of your most valuable customers. Who is he? He's the dreaded complainer—the customer most restaurateurs don't want to hear from. Or do they?

by William D. Stevens

People don't like to complain. In fact, only one out of three customers who have a complaint will tell you about it. That's why you will almost always get a "fine" response to the obligatory, "Is everything all right?"

But complaints can be valuable. A few years ago a White House Study of Consumer Affairs uncovered some interesting facts about complaints.

□ Customers who take the time to complain are more likely to come back again, even if the problem wasn't resolved satisfactorily.

□ Of those who take the time to complain, 54 to 70 percent will come back again if their complaints are resolved. That jumps to a staggering 95 percent if the complaint was resolved quickly.

□ The average customer who has a complaint tells nine or 10 people that the food or service was lousy. Thirteen percent will tell 20 or more.

□ Customers who have had complaints satisfactorily resolved tell an average of five other people, many of them prospective customers, about the great treatment they received.

That's priceless free advertising. Let me illustrate. A few summers ago I was driving through a small town on my way to a consulting appointment. I stopped for lunch at a restaurant I had never been to before. I ordered a sausage sandwich. The sausage came cooked—but only on the outside.

I asked the waitress to have the sandwich cooked a little longer. She came back, and the sandwich was just fine. Now if that were all that had happened, I would have eaten my now fully cooked sandwich and been on my way and would probably have tried another restaurant the next time I was in town.

But that's not all that happened. Right behind her was the restaurant manager, carrying a small sundae, covered with chocolate and topped with whipped cream, nuts and a cherry. He set it down in front of me and sat down in the booth opposite me.

Then he said: "You know, we're pretty proud of our little restaurant, but sometimes we make mistakes. This sundae is our way of saying we care and want you to come back again."

He had me. I can assure you, any time I am in Kewaskum, Wisconsin, I stop at the Homeplate Restaurant. It's the only place I go for lunch. Not only that, but anybody who has heard me speak in Wisconsin knows about the Homeplate Restaurant.

They turned my complaint into solid gold. That sundae probably cost the owner 50 cents, but his return on investment was many times that.

Here is how you can turn complaints into gold.

1. Never argue, defend or explain. Think of a time when you were upset and frustrated about a product or service you purchased. You called to complain, and the first response you got was an argument. Your "upset temperature" probably went right through the roof, and you vowed never again to do ousiness with that company as long as you lived.

2. Listen. Think of what would have happened when you had a complaint if instead of arguing or explaining, the other person had just listened. It's really kind of disarming. What about your "upset temperature" now? Apply your experience to your complaining customers. If pure silence bothers you, try "OK," "I see," "hmmmm," and "ah ha." All work well. Just be sure to focus all your attention on understanding what your guest is telling you. The information he or she shares will be invaluable.

3. Ask, "Would you mind if I took notes?" That question will reinforce in your customer's mind, a picture of you focusing all of your energy on understanding his or her complaint. It will also help you keep a record of the complaint for your complaint record book.

4. Summarize your understanding of the complaint in your own words. When it sounds as though the customer is done, summarize your understanding of what was said. Don't add. Don't subtract. Just check to make sure what you heard is what was said.

5. Ask, "What would you like us (me) to do?" Don't make the mistake of telling the customer what you are willing to do. About 80 percent of the time the customer will ask for less than what you would be willing to give. What complainers really want is understanding and reassurance that it won't happen again; and—most important—they want to know that you care.

Don't worry about being taken advantage of. Experience has shown that if you first hear the customer out without interrupting, few customers try to take advantage of you by asking for something unreasonable.

6. Do what the customer asks you to do, regardless of the short-term cost. Even if you feel the customer's request is not 100 percent justified, give a refund if a customer wants one. Bring him or her another meal if that's what was asked for. It could be one of the best investments you will ever make.

Do you need more customers complaining?

Being just good enough isn't good enough anymore. Make sure the customer is fully satisfied—nay, thrilled and delighted. Remember: It's not smiling at customers that will get them to come back, it's making sure they smile on the way out.

Do you need more customers complaining to you? You bet you do! ❑

Bill Stevens is director of the Center for Management Excellence in Greenfield, Wisconsin. He is a trainer, consultant, speaker and researcher on fast food company leadership, staff building and customer satisfaction.

GETTING THEM TO TALK

Behavior-based Interviewing

by Monnie Ryan

Max Karl Winkler

It's every manager's dream. The candidate you've selected has just the right blend of productivity and personal pizzazz. You're happy; your new employee is happy. It's a mutually satisfying relationship that continues for a long time. Too often, however, the dream is a nightmare. Instead of finding a perfect match, you have hired an employee who just doesn't measure up. Probably sooner than later, you part company.

How, then, can you improve your interviewing techniques to ensure that the next person hired is the best for the job?

Start by reviewing the written job description. Then, get input from supervisors, coworkers and subordinates. If possible, try to actually observe an employee who is doing well at a similar position and analyze why he or she is good at the job.

Three target areas

After you have a working knowledge of the vacant position, sit down and develop a list of (1) technical qualifications, (2) personality characteristics and (3) job-culture requirements.

For example, some company environments are highly structured and require employees to follow specific duties. Not all prospective employees perform well in that type of atmosphere.

The next—and most important—step is the preparation of interview questions. Always prepare questions in advance of the interview; "winging it" isn't appropriate for two reasons. First, it's too easy to forget to ask a crucial question, and second, it is

(continued on page 20)

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The restaurant industry is changing again. The idea of "processing" customers—simply opening the door and extracting money from a line of people—is gone. We have more competition; there are more alternatives. And we are looking at higher customer expectations.

Restaurateurs are suddenly recognizing that the service employee, the one who faces the customer, is the single most important employee we have. Everyone who works behind that person is there simply to make the service employee look good in the eyes of the customer so that the customer will leave satisfied.

Hire "sparklers"

So, if we want to give away the gift of friendship, then we'd darn well better pay attention to the selection process.

We must tell our managers we want people who have the personality to represent us well with the public. We want "sparklers"—people who are friendly, sincere and enthusiastic—and we have to get them in spite of the labor shortage and high wage costs. That means we must base our judgments on how the applicants look and how they sound.

When I interview, I want the candidates to talk to me. I ask them questions about where they have been,

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HIRING FOR PERSONALITY

by Michael Hurst

Everyone has heard by now that service will be the benchmark of success in the 1990s. But how can you find people who give away the gift of friendship? You hire for personality, for sparkle, for enthusiasm.

what they have done and what they would like to do. I listen to them and make the same type of decision a customer makes. Does this person come across well?

The key question in my interviews has always been: "What is the funniest thing that has ever happened to you?" If this person looks at me and says, "I don't know, I guess I can't think of anything funny right now," then I know that is how they will come across to my guests. Now, some of them will look at you, start to smile and say, "A lot of funny things have happened to me, and I would not tell you any of them." Those people I might hire just because I wonder what turned them off so fast. This is where subjective judgment comes in.

Look for expressiveness

The ones I really want, though, are those who say, "Well, I'm not sure if this is the funniest thing, but on my way here today . . . " and they suddenly start talking. And when they talk, they use expressive movement. They change their tone of voice, they move their head, they move their hands. With body language they show that they think it is funny. That body language is important when they are talking about the new dessert, the new soup or the new french-fried potato, that something on the menu they are excited about. Their recommendation and the way they show it is special—they are highly believable, sincere—in short, a friend!

I will never forget the time when one of our managers was interviewing an applicant. I was in a meeting two offices away and suddenly I heard loud stomping, shouting and hollering. I called my secretary and asked, "What is going on? I can't hear my own meeting." She said, "Well, they are interviewing down the hall. If you want to call, call direct because the door is closed." So I called and said, "You know I'm trying to have a meeting; what's all the noise?" The manager said, "I'm interviewing for a job at the front desk and I asked the applicant what was the funniest thing that ever happened to her. And I think we finally got one that's too crazy for us." I said, "I haven't seen her, but I can tell that she's got to be a winner. Hire her and put her on the front desk."

Expressive movement lends a high degree of credibility to the person talking. We must never encourage a person like that to sell things. Instead, we must encourage that person to talk about things they believe in. Sincerity has a much higher long-term value.

The other thing to look for in judging people is their ability to laugh at themselves. It is very easy for us to laugh at one another. But the really nice people, the ones who come across well quickly, laugh easily at themselves. When I find someone like that, I want to take that person straight to the front desk. I just want that person to remember names, stand there and say "How nice it is to see you! Welcome back." If I teach people like that how to take reservations, process credit cards or balance the books, they forget that they are service employees. I can put the accountants behind a screen, but I want that friendly person out front winning over customers.

Bring on part-timers

One method I use to ensure that I have a good set of personalities on staff is to interview people on a continual basis. I am always looking for help. The reason I can always hire someone is because I try to maintain a balance between part-time and full-time employees.

The 50 percent of my staff who work part-time include housewives, lifeguards, schoolteachers and students. I want it that way. These people are tough to train, but they add precious enthusiasm and excitement to their jobs that is important to helping my full-timers maintain that gift of friendship. Those part-timers come to work and say, "Boy, am I glad to be here tonight. Charlie is home with the kids, and I really need this chance to get away." That's the kind of employee who will stay, because the job is a break in her routine. It's fun, and it helps her get the extra money to buy a car or a cottage or send her son to college. Oh sure, part-time workers will need time off for sick kids and other priorities. They are not tied to their jobs. But if we understand that, they will stay for years. They will work hard to get that "thank you" from their customers.

Just the other day I hired a waitress who is as good as any I have ever seen. It's not that she is so fast or so organized. She has a presence that causes people to think, "Wow, is she ever a nice person."

When she came in looking for work, I thought to myself, "This one has it. I couldn't teach anyone this. I have to hire her now while she is looking for work." Even though technically I had no openings when I hired her, I will just wiggle the schedules to make room for her. There is always one person who would not mind an extra day off. Then as time goes on, someone will leave, and I will have absorbed a winner. If we wait until we are desperate, we will never end up with the really good ones.

Niceness counts

We have to get nice people working for us—not everybody is nice. Selecting "sparklers" is extremely important, because motivation begins when we hire and then extends throughout our operations. It is up to us to see that our managers recognize the winners when they apply, and hire them.

possible to inadvertently ask a question that could be challenged in a court of law by a disgruntled also-ran.

Having a prepared list of questions, on the other hand, allows the interviewer to be reasonably consistent in the questions asked of each candidate. It also provides a "cheat sheet" so you can pay attention to what the candidate is saying and doing instead of concentrating on what your next question will be.

Past performance is best predictor

The questions chosen are all-important. The biggest mistake most interviewers make is not understanding that past performance is the best predictor of future behavior. Effective questions are designed to elicit examples that show the candidate has the necessary qualities for the job. Simply sticking to a standard "laundry list" of interview questions will only reveal which applicants are skilled in interview techniques.

When you go to a race track, for example, you're likely to place your money on a horse that has won in the past. The businessworld is no exception; skills, knowledge and abilities displayed in previous jobs are those most likely to be repeated, and behavior-based interviewing brings these qualifications to light.

"Avoid setting up a hypothetical situation and asking the candidate to explain how he or she would handle it," urges Tim Mooney, manager of targeted assessment at Development Dimensions International, a management consulting firm headquartered in Pittsburgh. Most candidates will simply provide a standard answer that reflects what they think the interviewer wants to hear. "But that doesn't mean they can put it into practice and achieve good results," Mooney cautions. "There's a big difference between knowledge and ability."

Once you have determined your requirements, it is an easy jump in logic to determine the questions you will ask. For example, to determine an applicant's expertise in a "can-do" skill, such as knowledge of computer languages, the interviewer might ask, "Describe in detail a program you have written in FORTRAN." To test customer-relations ability, the question might be phrased, "Think of a time you were faced with a particularly difficult customer. What did you do to defuse the situation?"

The biggest mistake most interviewers make is not understanding that past performance is the best predictor of future behavior.

To determine a "will-do" skill such as initiative, you might ask the candidate to tell you some of the suggestions he or she made within the past six months. Conflict-resolution skills might be evaluated by the question, "Tell me about a time when your subordinates disagreed about how to handle a project. What did you do and what was the outcome?"

Consultants maintain that "job-culture fit" is the most difficult interview category. You could ask the candidate to explain what aspect of his or her current job is most satisfying and why. And, conversely, which aspect is most dissatisfying. It's important to look at both sides. Look at an applicant's resume for inconsistencies or points that may need clarification.

Ask open-ended questions

Questions should be open-ended; that is, not answerable by a simple yes or no. The more freely the applicant speaks, the more information you have available with which to make an intelligent decision. But be sure to allow plenty of time for the candidate to answer; thinking of specific examples of past behavior isn't always easy. To make the situation more comfortable, make a statement such as "I know that's a difficult question ... please take your time."

Often, a candidate will hesitate to give an example because he or she wants to be sure it is the "right" answer. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers, that you are simply trying to understand his or her strengths and weaknesses.

Just before the interview, review the applicant's resume for an item that could be used as an icebreaker, such as a common interest. Beginning with a nonthreatening question sets a tone of friendliness and openness and provides a "comfort buffer" that puts the candidate—and the interviewer—at ease. "It's important to maintain the candidate's self-esteem throughout the interview," Mooney says. "You can accomplish that through smiles or by paying the candidate an occasional compliment."

Listen

Then listen. "The primary responsibility of an interviewer should not be to ask questions," Mooney says, "but rather to listen for the answers and observe behavior." Pay attention to body language, which may provide additional clues to future behavior. Lack of eye contact, constant handwringing or a tentative voice, for example, may signal a lack of confidence that could spill over into job situations.

Take thorough notes. Although most interviewers like to think they will remember everything that was said, most do not. Information gathered from several candidates is easily lost in the shuffle. Jot down key words or phrases with each interview question.

Rarely would you make a large expenditure without consulting with others in the company; yet hiring decisions are often made on the basis of one opinion. Each candidate should be interviewed by several company representatives. Later, data collected can be shared during a discussion of each candidate's strengths and weaknesses.

Finally, remember that an interview is a two-way street. An interviewee should be scrutinizing the company as much as he or she is being scrutinized. Questions about the company's future direction or career opportunities down the road indicate that the candidate is interested in more than just salary or benefits. You can learn a tremendous amount from the kinds of questions the individual asks. ❑

Should your restaurant offer doorside service? Industry experts say the answer is certainly yes if you fall into one of the three most common categories: an upscale restaurant frequented by customers who expect such service, a downtown restaurant in a redeveloping area that is not safe or comfortable for walking, or a busy establishment with high automobile volume and inadequate parking. A fourth reason for valet parking is a temporary problem, such as nearby construction or a special event that creates a bottleneck.

"The nationwide average maximum walking distance acceptable before a customer reconsiders his destination

Photo courtesy of F. Scott's in Washington DC

is 200 to 500 feet. That is greatly influenced by what the customer has to walk past. Having to cross a busy street, even with a crosswalk, will discourage patrons. And having to step over someone on a sidewalk or walk past a dangerous area will deter a person from walking at all," notes Robert Weant, vice president of technical services at the Eno Foundation for Transportation, Inc. a privately owned think tank in Westport, Connecticut, devoted to transportation research.

Once you decide that you want to offer valet parking, you must decide if this is a service your staff will provide or one that is best suited to an outside company. For example, to run a valet service of its own, a restaurant must invest in the necessary equipment—key box, signage, tickets and uniforms. If the restaurant has no parking lot, one must be found and a lease negotiated. Insurance must be increased to cover additional liability.

The restaurateur must then recruit, interview, hire and train a staff and attend to the necessary city requirements. Once the service is running, the owner or a designated employee must supervise the service and manage the no-shows, illnesses, turnover and other personnel headaches.

With all the responsibilities calling from inside the restaurant, many restaurateurs opt to hire a valet parking operator. Often there are cost benefits because of the economies of scale.

"Legitimate valet parking operators with several clients usually can buy blanket insurance coverage for less than an individual restaurant could," explains Tracey Leverton, vice president of Valet Parking Service, Inc., in Culver City, California, one of the nation's largest and oldest valet-parking operators and the company that coined the term in 1946. "They also get better leases on parking lots, because they need space for more than a single restaurant."

With the delegation of duties comes the danger of poor service, however. The most common complaint among restaurateurs is the inadequate service their valet parking operators provide.

"In my experience, the further you get from the owner or manager, the worse the service becomes," explains Tom Anderson, general manager at the Parkway Grill, a thriving restaurant in Pasadena, California, which parks 8,000 cars each month.

"The service our valets provide is a direct reflection on us," Anderson adds, and that is why he has begun insisting that every new valet meet with him before he begins work at the Parkway. "In the past we have had a few problems with rude or inattentive valets. That's not the way I do business. I want every person who represents this restaurant to know how we view service."

Arrangements vary

Arrangements between restaurants and valet parking operators are so varied it is difficult to establish a standard. Some restaurants pay their valet service a fee each month to park all cars entering the lot; others pay a fee per parking attendant per shift. Some pay nothing at all but allow the valet service to realize its profit from service charges collected from customers. And a few booming establishments are paid by the valet service for the right to the lot. In those cases, the service pays its attendants an hourly wage and receives profit from tips or service charges.

Jimmy Murphy, owner of Jimmy's, an elegant French continental restaurant near busy Century City in Los Angeles, is paid $500 per month by his parking operator. "It's just a token, really," Murphy says. "I've been offered as high as $3,000 a month for the concession. But it's not just the revenue; it's the service we offer more than anything else. Hugo Flores has been handling my parking for almost 11 years. He knows which customer likes to park his own car and which ones like certain parking spaces. My guests know that they just have to ask and their cars will be washed or even waxed while they are at lunch."

The many variables make it impossible to estimate the cost of valet service to a particular restaurant without evaluating its needs, says Leverton. "If there were a formula to figure out costs, we would have found it," he says. "Costs are affected by the volume of cars passing through the lot, the distance between the restaurant and an off-site lot, the safety of the neighborhood and its effect on liability insurance, and the number of personnel needed to run the service adequately."

Contracts with parking operators are usually one-year renewable agreements or month-to-month arrangements with a 30-day cancellation clause.

The valet parking service should pay attendants' wages, payroll taxes and benefits. It should also provide and pay for training, uniforms (unless the restaurant requests a uniform unique to its establishment), supplies and support personnel.

Because of the expense, some restaurants now authorize their operators to levy a service charge per car. The charge ranges from $1.00 to $2.50, depending on the city. A tip may be given in addition to the service charge. Leverton believes it will be the arrangement of the future.

What your city may want

Your city ordinances may require your restaurant or valet service to go before a traffic and parking commission before allowing curbside parking to begin. If you are located on a busy street, the city may require a fee to establish a loading zone in front of the restaurant as well, to make up for lost parking-meter revenue.

It is the city's responsibility to cooperate with immigration authorities to ensure that employees are legal residents and that no traffic laws are broken in the valet's zeal to get the most cars parked. However, cities usually don't require bonds or screening of employees, so it is the restaurant's responsibility to confirm that the parking valet performs all security checks.

In Chicago, where a convenient parking space is as rare as a timely plane change at O'Hare International Airport, the Illinois Restaurant Association (IRA) recently worked with the Chicago City Council to create an ordinance that regulates valet activities. Andy Kelly, president of the IRA, explains that Chicago's downtown regentrification has caused an unrelenting parking crisis.

"Few restaurants have adequate lot parking, so valets must park on the street," he explains. "But they started

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parking in front of fire hydrants and in crosswalks, and consequently they broke all sorts of traffic laws. We got involved to ensure that a fair ordinance would protect the residents and restaurants from irresponsible valet operators." The regulation now requires valet operators to be licensed and insured, to pay a tax and to park cars only on main streets and in lots, rather than on residential side streets.

Beverly Hills is probably the toughest and most closely regulated city in the nation, notes Leverton. In that city, a seven-resident parking commission requires a map illustrating a route from the restaurant to the lot and a demonstration that traffic flow will be controlled.

Parking-enforcement employees and the Beverly Hills Police Department patrol restaurants with valet parking to confirm that services are complying with traffic-flow patterns, that they are only accepting cars within marked loading zones and that no other infractions are occurring.

"Every attendant working in the city has a background check through the California Department of Justice," he says. "They handle keys to very expensive vehicles, so everyone is protected by careful initial checking."

Insurance—the most important factor

Insurance is the most important element of your contract with a valet parking service, yet it will be the simplest area, because you simply must not proceed without proof of adequate insurance with deductibles appropriate to the operator's resources. Small companies with low fees sometimes squeak by on minimal insurance coverage that can be exhausted by one claim.

Anderson's first valet service allowed its insurance to lapse while it shopped for better rates, without informing him. Four months passed before he heard the news through the restaurant grapevine. The valet lost its prize contract that day.

"He wasn't covered for one penny!" Anderson exclaims. "One crushed Mercedes could have turned us into a has-been restaurant. Now we require proof of insurance and yearly proof of renewal."

A valet parking operator will probably be required to purchase insurance of several types, which can vary by city ordinance or state law. Among them are public liability, property damage, bodily injury, garage-keepers' legal liability, comprehensive general liability, workers' compensation and excess liability umbrella coverage. Your business insurance advisor will recommend adequate coverage for your area and the type and volume of your restaurant. Although the valet operator is liable for damages under most arrangements, you should confirm your liability and protection with both legal and insurance advisors.

"A restaurant is not liable for damages once it has contracted with a valet parking service that provides a certificate of adequate insurance," says Leverton. He admits, however, that some customers will sue whoever appears to have the deepest pocket.

False and fraudulent claims are the biggest headaches of the business, Leverton says. "Despite the disclaimer on the tickets, people can make claims of damage or missing items if they choose to," he explains. "Most of the time, nuisance suits are just paid off by the insurance company, and a lot of people know that. If our attendant didn't notice the scratch, we're stuck."

Murphy admits that his restaurant has been stung a few times by what he suspects were false claims. "When you drive a Rolls-Royce, even a scratch can be a very expensive repair," he points out. "To protect ourselves, we train our parking attendants to do a quick spot-check of the car before the person enters the restaurant. If there is a scratch or dent, they call attention to it."

Many valet companies want customers to use an auto body shop where the valet operator has arranged a lower price for repair. If the body shop is carefully selected and monitored, that can be a convenient arrangement for the restaurant, valet operator and car owner. However, if the shop does not provide top service to car owners, the restaurant suffers.

"It goes against our concept of service to guests to insist that they take their cars to a specific garage," says Anderson. "If they don't mind, fine. But if they have a favorite garage they want to use, I tell my operator that's where they'll go, like it or not. "In this and all other decisions, I know that if I don't stick up for my customer, he'll have a sour taste in his mouth for the Parkway, not for the valet concessionaire."

Key questions to ask a valet service

Business Operations:

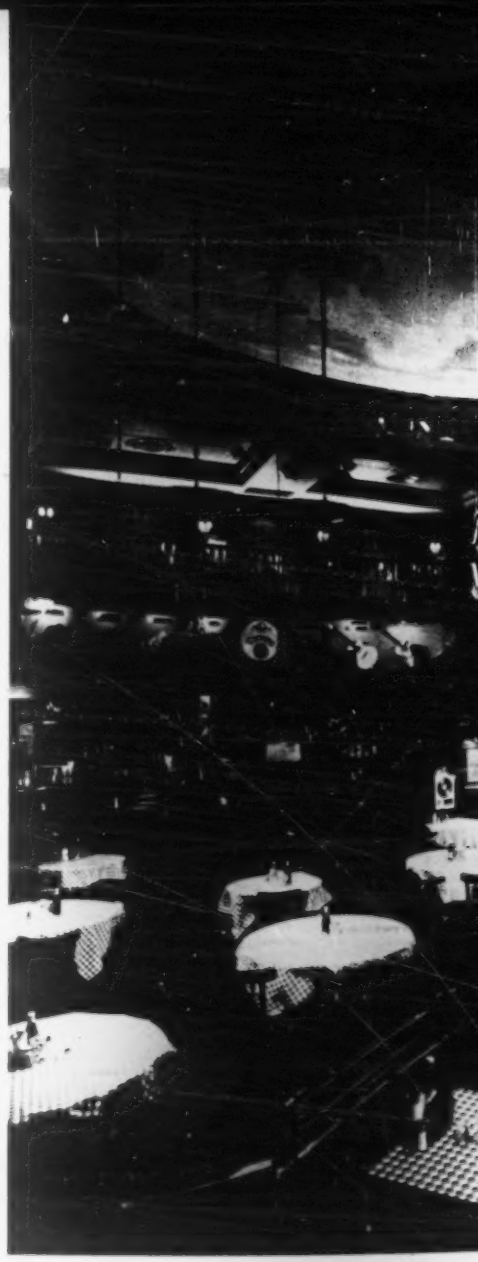
- ▶Can the valet provide recent, ongoing, local references?
- ▶Is the operator's insurance coverage adequate to protect your restaurant? Is your restaurant named as the additional insured on the policy? Are you given a certification of insurance?
- ▶Will the operator apply for and renew all necessary permits, licenses and other city requirements?
- ▶Does the operator pay all payroll, workers' compensation, state taxes and Social Security benefits?
- ▶Does the operator provide a monthly payroll and service-volume statement to the restaurant (if the fee is determined by volume or number of valet hours used)?
- ▶Does the operator belong to a parking industry association and adhere to its code of ethics?

Personnel:

- ▶Are you provided proof of clean driving and criminal records for all employees?
- ▶Do you have the right to reject any employee for any reason?
- ▶Are all employees in compliance with immigration regulations?
- ▶Are all employees provided uniforms?
- ▶What kind of training do new valets receive?
- ▶Who supervises the valets?
- ▶Is there adequate additional staff to cover during illnesses, holidays and busy times?

Damage claims:

- ▶Who handles claims of damage? How quickly?
- ▶Does the customer have a choice of repair shops, or does the operator require that repairs be made at one place?



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"The ceiling is probably the most
restaurant. It's the single largest e
life and soul of a restaura

The Ceiling

by Joan E

"Take it from the top" is the obvious starting point in most projects; yet the ceiling is often ignored as a restaurant design tool.

"There's a lot you can do with paint and color, or by hanging things from the ceiling," says Hard Rock Cafe curator Steve Routhier. "If you think about it, the ceiling is exposed to virtually the entire restaurant. It's foolish to overlook a detail that large. Doing something doesn't necessarily mean spending a lot of money."

Adam Tihany designs about 10 restaurants a year with his own firm in Manhattan, and he echoes Routhier's sentiment. "Restaurateurs are not interested in doing something with the ceiling, because of the expense," says Tihany, "but the ceiling is probably the most important design element in any restaurant. It's the single largest exposed facet of the room. The true life and soul of a restaurant starts with the ceiling."

A showcase for local memorabilia

One way to show off a ceiling is to use it as the backdrop for highlighting a restaurant's theme. From top to bottom, Starbuck's in Hyannis, Massachusetts, is a showcase for local folk art and memorabilia, such as weather-beaten weathervanes, old shop signs, whirligigs, team photos and antique family portraits, collected by the family of Starbuck's' owner, Marty Bloom.

The largest and most notable item in the collection is the half-scale model of a World War II Fokker airplane suspended from the ceiling and piloted by an Errol Flynn-type dummy. "We back up to the local airport," says Bloom, "and there are a lot of old Casablanca-type airplanes parked out back, old DC-3s and such. So we made it our mission to find one we could 'fly' in the restaurant. My dad bought it from a guy in Nashua, New Hampshire, who had built it himself."

Starbuck's' ceiling was also put to work to solve the problem of a lack of space for liquor storage. Liquor is stored and displayed in hanging birdcages around the bar area. The cages look like fantastic local finds, but as Bloom explains, "The cages are not really antique. They have to support about 300 pounds of bottles at a time, so we had them made."

"A whole salmon run"

Homemade art was the answer executive chef/owner Greg Higgins came up with to fill the large space created by the ceiling in the Heathman Bakery and Pub of Portland, Oregon. Higgins recalls that he "needed something to activate the space in our 18-foot ceilings, but I also like to tie everything in with our theme of Northwest American cuisine."

He thought of the arresting Japanese *gyotaku* salmon print that artist and friend Roger Long had made for

Showing up ceiling myths

Myth #1: A high ceiling is a noisy ceiling. "Not necessarily," says designer Brad Elias of the Hochheiser-Elias Design Group in Manhattan. "As sound travels farther, it gets weaker. With a very high ceiling, most of the sound has dissipated by the time it's reflected." A high, curved ceiling can be acoustically harder to control, however.

Myth #2. An "exposed" ceiling (showing ductwork, for example) is the most economical way to do a ceiling. "An exposed ceiling can have a cheap casual effect," according to Dallas designer Charles Deboub, "but it is not necessarily the most economical approach. It still has to be functional and in line with building codes, so you have special ductwork involved, insulation, special wiring and lighting needs. To me, the most economical way to do a ceiling is with inlaid two-by-fours, but it doesn't do anything for the look of a place."

Myth #3: The ultimate decision on what to do with the ceiling is a matter of cost. Most designers agree that "doing it on the cheap" is the wrong way to approach ceiling treatments. A ceiling doesn't have to cost a lot to add a lot. As Elias says, "When you are motivated by doing it cheaply, the result looks that way, and that's a poor reflection on the whole restaurant."

The large rotunda ceiling of the Dallas Hard Rock Cafe features a mural and a dazzling Texas star.

him as a wedding gift, so Higgins commissioned 24 more to hang from the restaurant ceiling—"a whole salmon run" for the restaurant.

The large banners, size 30-by-48 inches, hang at varying heights, replicating the flow of the river. The prints are actually a textural impression of fresh salmon caught in local waters. Artist Long worked on his project right in the kitchen, employing muslin and nontoxic paints to render each unique print. "People are fascinated by the prints," enthuses Higgins, "especially when they learn that we actually prepare and serve the fish that are printed. The salmon banners warm up and soften the space in the restaurant, but they also serve another purpose. Roger [Long] really 'speaks the fish's language,' and his work expands people's awareness of fish and the environment."

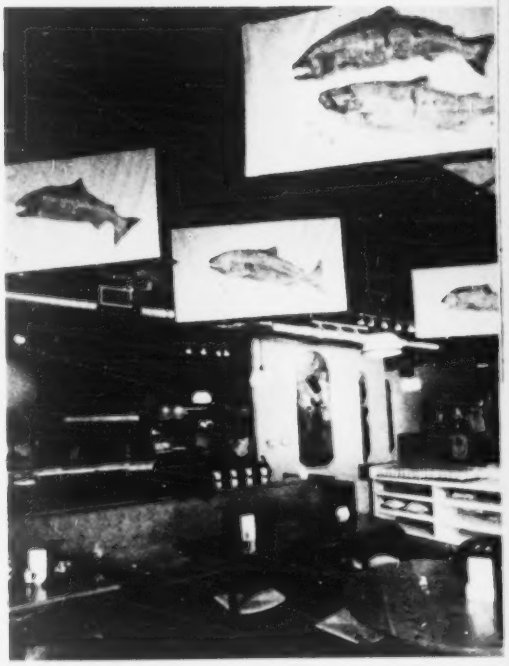
The ceiling as "show"

Ceilings are as much a part of the dinner attraction at the Hard Rock Cafes throughout the world as the restaurants' $5 million rock-'n'-roll memorabilia collection. "We use detail to distinguish ourselves," says Routhier, "so every detail we overlook, including the ceiling, is a strike against us."

Each Hard Rock Cafe ceiling is part of the restaurants' aim to "entertain the eye as well as the rest of the senses." The ceilings of the Hard Rock Cafes in Dallas and New York City are particularly notable.

In Dallas, designer Charles Daboub created the Hard Rock Cafe within a former Baptist church, complete with a large rotunda in the center of the ceiling. "The convex portion of the dome is the only part of the original ceiling we retained in the main dining room," says Daboub. Rather than adding lowering effects to it, Daboub highlighted the dome with a mural of sky and clouds. A 12-foot, stainless-steel-and-bronze Texas star dazzles in the dome's center.

Joan Herlong is a freelance writer in Arlington, Virginia, who contributes regularly to ***Restaurants USA.***



Not every restaurant can improve its ceiling by hanging large salmon banners, but it worked for the Heathman Bakery and Pub of Portland, Oregon.

In the "cheese club" area on the mezzanine level of the Dallas restaurant, the ambience is somewhat more intimate than in the lively main dining room. Here Daboub recreated an old English pub ceiling using "a ceiling from an actual pub, assembled at the job site, plus new pieces carved and milled" to complete the effect.

At the Hard Rock Cafe in Manhattan, the theme and lines of the famous guitar-bar have been vertically transmitted throughout the rest of the restaurant. Routhier explains that the bar itself is a "a 70-foot replica of a Fender Stratocaster electric guitar. The wainscoting, wall and dropped ceiling above the bar echo the hourglass curve of the guitar."

Don't slight the ceiling

Whatever the look of your restaurant, be sure the ceiling caps it off. "I often get requests to simply 'paint out' a ceiling," says Charles Daboub, but he resists doing anything to a ceiling unless it is part of the overall plan for the restaurant. "The ceiling should never be an afterthought," says Daboub, "but a conscious decision in line with the look of the entire restaurant."

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t important design element in any exposed facet of the room. The true int starts with the ceiling."

as Showcase

.. Herlong

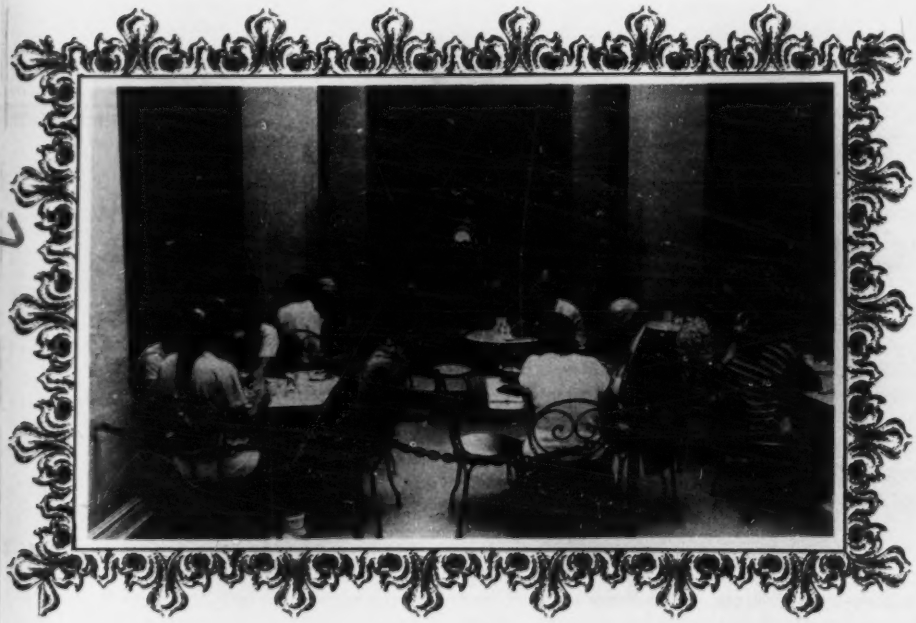
MUSEUM RESTAURANTS

In the Great Lakes region, in Texas and on both coasts, museums are becoming known for more than their art collections. Foodservice managers in the museums we contacted discussed the serious effort they are making to tempt a discriminating clientele.

Where Palette and Palate Meet

by Mary Kincaid

Today at many museums, the noon or evening meal has become the focus of a visit. No longer dedicated to serving only visitors, museum restaurants attract surrounding office workers on a regular basis.



At the National Gallery of Art, menus change four times a year at the Buffet, and hot items more often, in order to pique the interest of repeat visitors.

Executives often bring important clients to business lunches or catered events, and hostesses choose the ambience of museums for special lunches. This new interest in museum dining has triggered menu changes.

Food prepared by museums

Shirley Shoched, manager of The Museum Cafe at the Toledo Museum of Art, notes that 200 to 400 people eat at the cafe daily. Outside patronage accounts for 90 percent of business, with only 10 percent coming from museum staff and visitors. This reverses statistics of past years.

"Office workers often call in to see what's on the menu so that they can enjoy a quality meal unavailable elsewhere at the price. Now we change the menu daily, rather than weekly, and we make everything in our kitchen. We even chop our own vegetables, blend five different types of coffee beans and whip our own fresh cream," says Shoched. "Crepes and quiches are popular, as well as a vegetable gateau and our own spinach pie. Chilled Burgundy soup and hot chicken salad are both favorites."

Cafe meals are always geared to special exhibits and toward the customers. "When a show came from the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad last year, we featured blintzes and caviar at a members' lunch. On Saturdays, when students fill the museum, we feature sloppy Joes, foot-long hot dogs and pizzas," says Shoched.

The menu always includes three entrees, two hot soups, one cold soup, a variety of fresh salads and four or five homemade pastries. Beverages include soft drinks, beer, coffee and tea, as well as red and white Ohio and California wines.

At the Art Institute of Chicago, cool foods and salads are most popular with the 800 patrons who eat in the museum's four restaurants every day.

"The trend here (including the upscale dining room) has shifted noticeably from red meat to fish and veal. Lighter dishes are more in demand and fewer sauces are needed. Our menus reflect the last few years' movement toward fowl and seafood. We always used to have steak in the dining room; we only have tournedos now," says Bob Wiedenbeck, associate director of special events and dining operations. "Liquor sales are not as heavy as in outside restaurants. We serve lots of glasses and carafes of wine, rather than hard liquor," he adds.

The Gallery Buffet, at the Dallas Museum of Art, offers lunches six days a week to typically 200 visitors (or up to 500 for special events, such as the recent Georgia O'Keefe exhibit).

According to food and beverage director and chef Jack Vandever, soups and salads rate tops, but menus change weekly and are tied to special exhibits. For the O'Keefe opening dinner, the Southwestern theme featured sauteed veal in red wine with Texas pecan bordelaise, and tortilla and goat-cheese lasagna.

Mary Kincaid is a freelance writer in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Food prepared by contractors

Mark Stein, owner of Mark of Excellence Catering Service Inc., contracts with the Detroit Institute of Arts, where some 400 to 500 museum visitors fill the Kresge Court Cafe daily. They choose what tempts them from the scattered cafeteria stations that feature custom-made deli sandwiches, main-dish specials, salads, desserts and beverages that include coffee, tea and Michigan wine and beer.

"Our salads are very popular," Stein says. "We recently changed the line layout and added the deli-sandwich area, specialty breads and a very good salad bar."

He notes that hot dishes change daily. Although the menu includes experimental and upscale items, people regularly ask for old-fashioned meatloaf. "They call in advance for menu items, especially our meatloaf," Stein says. "I notice a taste trend toward more home-style meals. Wine sauces and cream sauces are giving way to natural gravies. The trend is just beginning, but it's very noticeable. I see a shift, too, from nouvelle cuisine to American-style food and less pretentious dishes. Even so," he adds, "museum clientele demand more menu sophistication than our outside corporate clients want."

Martha Geffen, president of M.S. Penn Inc., who contracts as manager of the Studio Restaurant at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, also has seen a change in food orientation. "I notice that lately visitors ask what the food has been cooked in, and they choose olive oil above butter. We are now using less butter than before," she says.

Geffen changes the menu daily, and 200 people going through the cafeteria line choose from a menu that features two hot entrees (Greek spinach pie being a favorite); entree-sized salads, including salade Nicoise; two soups; three or four sandwiches and four desserts. Beverages include beer and California wines.

Geffen, experienced in hotel restaurant management, too, notes that museum-goers appreciate exotic and creative menu items, such as those from the Southwest, Thailand, China and Scandinavia served at the Studio Restaurant. "Hotel guests, in contrast, need more steaks and basic foods. Museum-goers are excited by different dishes," she reports.

At the Plaza Cafe at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art managed by David Garrett of Somerset Caterers, Inc., "The key word to describe the menu is innovative," says Pam Jenkinson, head public information officer, pointing to Moroccan couscous, Szechuan roast pork, Beef Provencal and a salad bar that features such items as artichokes, hearts of palm and pasta. Customers pay by the ounce, and the salad bar menu changes every three months. At least one menu item ties into each special museum exhibit.

The 4,000 patrons who visit each week linger about 45 minutes in one of the museum's two cafes. The Plaza cafe seats 160; the Court, 64. Visitors spend from $5.50 to $8.50 for a typical lunch.

In Washington DC, the National Gallery of Art retains Guest Services, Inc., to supply the foods for its four eateries (the main cafeteria alone serves 2,200 people a day).

According to the museum's director of foodservice Tom Fechter, allowances are made for a variety of dietary concerns. "People enjoy light items with low fat content, and those dishes always draw a positive response," he says, noting that the hot line is moving away from dishes with heavy sauces. Some popular replacements include vegetable lasagna and chicken Florentine.

Fechter adds that, in contrast to times past, he has noticed that cafeteria customers are now going first to the salad station. Formerly, they marched straight to the hot entrees. Still, patrons are eating more fresh-baked desserts and breads than ever before. One favorite is the cafe's pita toast.

At the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the curved wall at left echoes Frank Lloyd Wright's famous spiral theme. The museum's baked goods and hot foods are catered, but the salads and sandwiches are prepared on the premises.

Wines, too, are popular. All are American, predominantly from California, but Virginia and Maryland wineries are represented as well.

The museum's latest innovation, however, is an afternoon tea service with a dessert cart, which appeals to the hordes of foot-weary Capital visitors.

Satisfying appetites

In short, it seems that museums are working hard to satisfy both culinary and aesthetic appetites these days. ❑

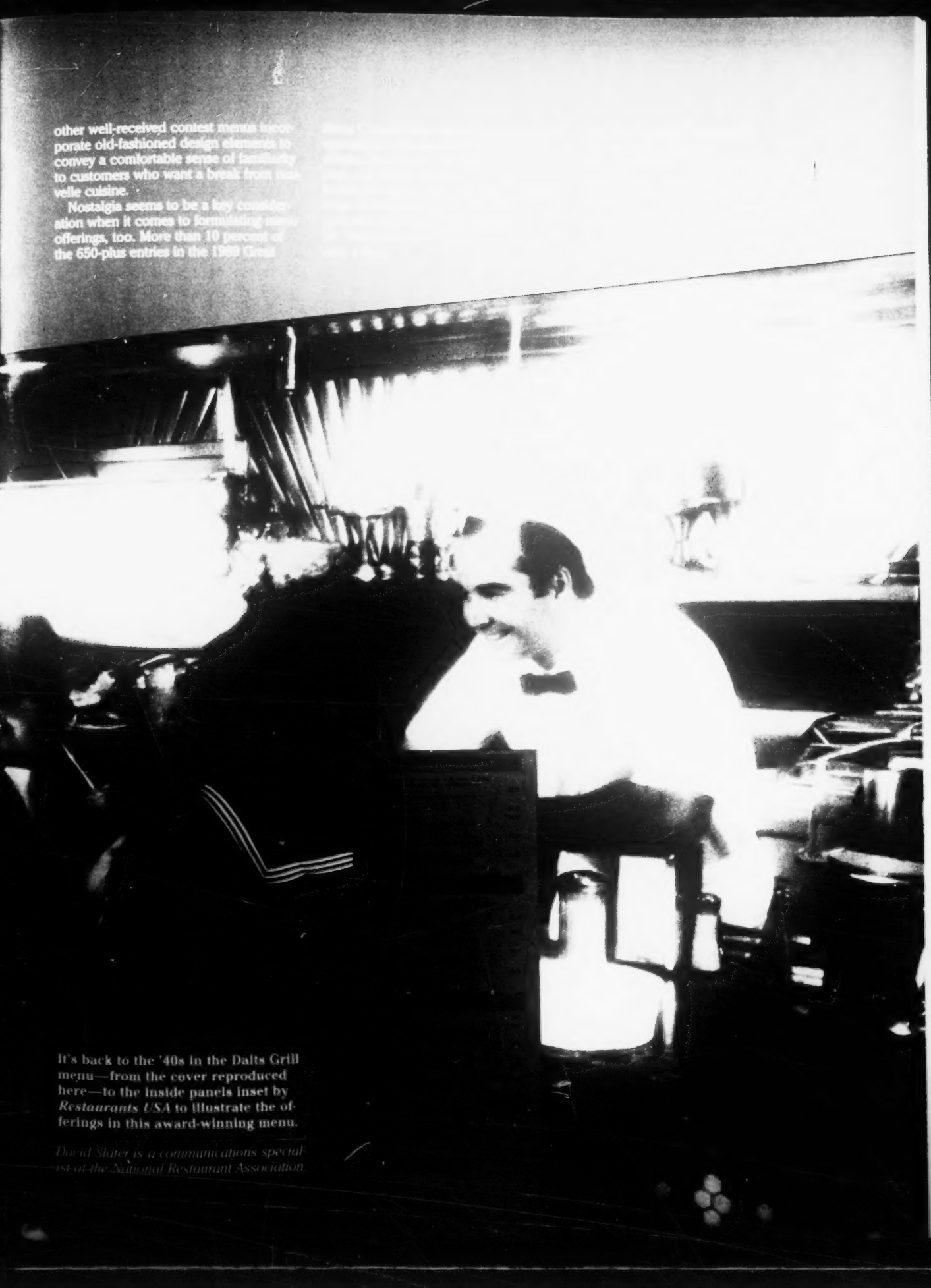
UPDATED OR NOT HOMESTYLE IS HOT

When it comes to menu design and menu offerings, nostalgia is not a thing of the past. For the second consecutive year, the judges of the National Restaurant Association's Great Menu Contest awarded top honors to a simple, 1940s-style menu that skillfully evokes wistful images of days gone by. And several

by David Slater

other well-received contest menus incorporate old-fashioned design elements to convey a comfortable sense of familiarity to customers who want a break from nouvelle cuisine.

Nostalgia seems to be a key consideration when it comes to formulating menu offerings, too. More than 10 percent of the 650-plus entries in the 1989 Great



It's back to the '40s in the Dalts Grill menu—from the cover reproduced here—to the inside panels inset by *Restaurants USA* to illustrate the offerings in this award-winning menu.

David Slater is a communications specialist at the National Restaurant Association.

Mid Cal Auto/Truck Plaza
Santa Nella, California

the name doesn't describe anything. So, when it was time to redesign the Dalts original menu, we decided to give it the history that the restaurant didn't have."

During a series of focus-group tests, says Casebolt, participants "repeatedly rejected 'overdesigned' menus. Instead, we found that people wanted something comfortable, recognizable and stable. So we designed the new menu to take customers back to the good old days."

Across all three panels of the menu's outside cover stretches a photograph of a crowded lunch counter at an actual Dalts in Dallas. The smiling counterman, waitress and customers, however, are all in 1940s-period dress. The photograph, which was the result of a grueling all-night photo shoot, is a black-and-white separation with a brown screen that gives the picture a period feel.

The inside menu lists the items in an Art Deco-style typeface, and the straightforward descriptions replace the original menu's flowing narratives. "We didn't sizzle the decriptions this time," says Casebolt, "because in a diner you just ask your server if you want more information about an item." Some of the offerings, such as fajitas and the Dalts boboli sandwich, smack of modernity. But cheese fries, juicy burgers and old-fashioned milkshakes harken back to the familiar old malt-shop menu.

The Dalts menu, introduced at the seven-year-old chain in October 1988, was an immediate success. "We knew it was a winner," laughs Casebolt, "when almost all the first shipment of menus were stolen within the first few weeks."

Good eats at Chez Piggy

Another prizewinning menu that successfully conveys a sense of days gone by belongs to *Chez Piggy*, a new 64-seat restaurant in Des Moines, Iowa, where customers can "pig out" at value prices. A cartoon pig on the menu's cover, encir-

CONTEMPORARY HOMESTYLE INTERPRETATIONS

If heart-healthy food at a truck stop isn't evidence of a new direction in homestyle foods, Philadelphia's Down Home Diner is. Owner Jack McDavid's two-year-old restaurant looks like a diner—with customers crowding the old-fashioned booths and lunch counter—and sounds like a diner—with clanging glasses and silverware drowning out the country-and-western jukebox.

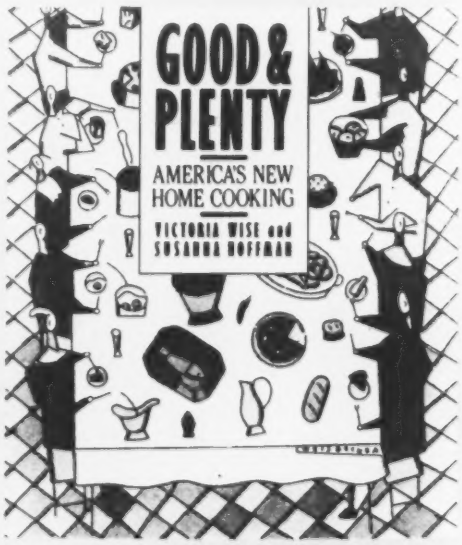
But McDavid prides himself on "taking the old classics and giving them something new and something old." His catfish is spruced up with ground pecans and served with ginger chutney. Buffalo meat is used in the chicken-fried steak and whole tuna in the tuna-fish sandwich. If the vegetable of the day is kale, it's panfried and absolutely fresh. Eggs come from turkeys and ducks, not chickens; and they are still warm when they get to the diner. All ketchups, jellies, jams and preserves are made in-house.

"We serve foods straight from the farm. It might not be perfectly manicured, but it's perfectly flavored," says McDavid. Better still, McDavid is able to serve his food at diner prices—nothing more than $8.00 at dinner or $6.00 at lunch. How does he do it? His diner is located in the Reading Terminal Market, where the freshest meats, cheeses and produce arrive daily.

Meanwhile, across the country in Oakland, California, the owners of the Good & Plenty Cafe are also updating traditional recipes as well as adapting international dishes to American tastes, all under the guise of "home cooking." At their informal coffee-house, where they often serve 800 covers in a day, the inexpensive menu is likely to range from homemade turkey tacos and quesadillas to grilled-cheese sandwiches—with Gouda and artichoke hearts or mozzarella and roasted peppers.

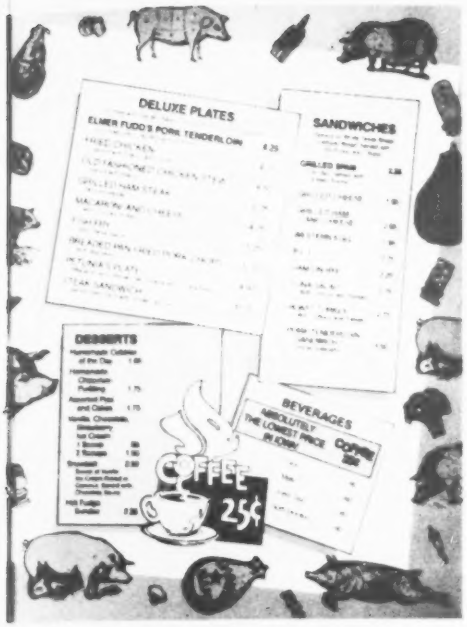
According to owners Victoria Wise and Susanna Hoffman, "Today's home cooking, in a major way, incorporates all kinds of cooking styles that were unheard of 20 years ago. Ethnic and Californian cuisines, the availability of fresher foods, nutrition-consciousness, the time factor—all these influences have worked to change our idea of home cooking."

When the owners explain the evolution of the chef's salad in their new cookbook, *Good & Plenty: America's New Home Cooking*, they are also describing the changes in home cooking in general. "In the '50s, what we called a chef's salad had canned beets and asparagus. Mushrooms were never to be seen. In the '60s, the canned vegetables turned fresh, and mushrooms became essential, followed shortly by sprouts and seeds. In the new vegetable consciousness, the meat disappeared. In the '70s, gourmet and esoteric



edibles came onto the scene. In the '80s, turkey came back, and the salad greens became escarole and red-leaf lettuce." Today's Good & Plenty Chef's Salad includes escarole, red-leaf lettuce, red cabbage, alfalfa sprouts, carrots, shiitake mushrooms, onions, sunflower seeds, ham, turkey and Gruyere, Emmentaler or Jarlsberg cheese.

Good & Plenty Cafe meatloaves are likely to be made from beef and pork, with a red-pepper sauce, or a spicy ground beef with hard-boiled eggs,



Whimsy is the trademark of Chez Piggy's award-winning menu.

cled by the words "Chez Piggy" and "Good Eats," sets the tone for the playful menu that specializes in inexpensive pork offerings.

Chez Piggy's name plays both on Des Moines' reputation as a pork capital and on the city's French heritage. For the restaurant's thematic pig decor, says Tom Bowen, vice president for food and beverage at Integra Restaurant and Hotel Company, "We wanted a clean diner look, but not too nostalgic." Life-size styrofoam pigs hanging from the ceiling do the trick. Printed on the suspended swine are playful sayings, such as "Save lambs—eat pork" and "Our mashed potatoes have lumps on purpose."

This theme is reflected in the menu as well, with its pig drawings and pork-meat charts. Boxes and colors set menu categories apart from one another. Certain specialty items, such as Elmer Fudd's Pork Tenderloin (a breaded pork tenderloin that overlaps a 10-inch platter), Grilled Spam (a Spam sandwich on rye bread) and 25-cent coffee, are emphasized further by bold, oversized print. The effective item-marketing resulted in a second-place finish in the menu contest's Greatest Merchandising Power category.

Heart-healthy roadside food?

Those who think homestyle restaurants serve nothing but heavy, calorie-laden dishes are in for a pleasant shock at several of today's diners and country restaurants. For example, *Richards Restaurants*, a 20-unit homestyle chain based in Bryant, Indiana, balances its menu of home-cooked classics with a variety of selections from a one-year-old "Health Club" section, which features smaller portions and breaks down each offering by calorie, sodium and cholesterol counts.

"We began by adding a few heart-healthy items to the menu and designating them with a heart," says Natalie

jalapenos, sherry and cilantro. Pot pie becomes an "upside-down one-crust pot pie with beef, potato and saffron pot-pie filling." And burgers become either turkey burgers, sausage burgers or ground-beef burgers stuffed with blue cheese, brie, cheddar or—gasp!—liverwurst. Hoffman and Wise believe that turkey—bland, low in cholesterol and versatile—is the "meat of the '90s," and they use the meat in everything from tacos and meatballs to burgers and salads.

Back to the future, or forward to the past, America's taste for home cooking clearly has not diminished. It seems you just can't keep a good meatloaf down.

SPICY GROUND-BEEF MEATLOAF

Serves 6

Ingredients:
4 large eggs, hard-boiled
6 ozs. mushrooms
1 medium onion
1½ jalapeno chili peppers
2¼ lbs. ground chuck
¾ cup heavy cream
¼ cup sherry
1¼ tspns. salt
1½ Tbs. chopped cilantro leaves

For the sauce, boil:
Juices from the cooked meatloaf
1 cup crushed tomatoes in puree
1/16 tspn. ground nutmeg
2 Tbs. chopped cilantro leaves

Method:
Heat oven to 350° F. Clean the mushrooms and trim the stem ends. Mince. Peel the onion. Remove the stems from the jalapeno peppers. Mince.

In a large bowl, combine the ground chuck, mushrooms, peppers and onion. Add one egg, cream, sherry and salt. Blend well.

To assemble, place half of the mixture in a 2-qt. baking dish. Cut the hard-boiled eggs lengthwise in half. Place 3 of the halves cut side up in a row down the center of the meatloaf. Sprinkle on cilantro. Cover each egg half with one of the remaining egg halves. Spread the remaining mixture over top.

Place meatloaf in oven and bake 1 hour and 15 to 20 minutes, or until meat thermometer registers 145° F. Remove and cool 15 minutes.

Serve meatloaf in ½-inch-thick slices, topped with a spoonful of the sauce. Serve remaining sauce on the side.

—Good & Plenty Cookbook

PAN-FRIED CHEESE CORNBREAD

Serves 6

Ingredients:
1 cup yellow cornmeal
½ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
2 tspns. baking powder
1 egg
½ cup milk
¼ cup water
¼ cup grated Parmesan, aged Asiago or Romano cheese
⅛ tspn. salt
¼ cup peanut oil
2 Tbs. butter

Method:
In a bowl, mix cornmeal, flour, baking powder, egg, milk, water, cheese and salt until well blended.

Pour oil into a 9 to 10-inch skillet or omelet pan. Pour in cornmeal mixture and spread to cover bottom evenly. Tightly cover pan. Cook over high heat 5 minutes. Reduce heat to low and cook 20 minutes more. Uncover pan and spread butter over top of the corn bread. Using a large metal spatula, turn cornbread over so the top is now on the bottom. Cover, increase heat to medium high, and cook 5 minutes more.

Turn out onto a plate. Cut into squares or wedges.

—Good & Plenty Cookbook

1989 Great Menu Contest winners

Grand Prize winners
- ☐ *First Place:* Dalts Grill, Dallas, TX
- ☐ *Second Place:* McDuffy's Sportsbar, Inc., Tempe, AZ
- ☐ *Third Place:* Ginsberg & Wong, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Restaurant: average check under $5 per person
- ☐ *First Place:* McDuffy's Sportsbar, Inc., Tempe, AZ
- ☐ *Second Place:* Chez Piggy, Des Moines, IA
- ☐ *Third Place:* Pizza Hut, Harbor City, CA

Restaurant: average check $5-15 per person
- ☐ *First Place:* Dalts Grill, Dallas, TX
- ☐ *Second Place:* Manhattan on Forbes, Pittsburgh, PA
- ☐ *Third Place:* The Fishwife at Asilomar Beach, Pacific Grove, CA

Restaurant: average check over $15 per person
- ☐ *First Place:* Guaymas, San Francisco, CA
- ☐ *Second Place:* Dundee's on the Bay, Sarasota, FL
- ☐ *Third Place:* La Hacienda Restaurant, Scottsdale, AZ

Institutional Foodservice
- ☐ *First Place:* Bloomington Hospital, Bloomington, IN
- ☐ *Second Place:* Baptist Hospital of Miami, Miami, FL
- ☐ *Third Place:* Union Club Restaurant, The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

Banquet/Catering
- ☐ *First Place:* The Watergate Hotel, Washington DC
- ☐ *Second Place:* Creative Gourmets, Ltd., Charlestown, MA
- ☐ *Third Place:* Rochester Institute of Technology, School of Food, Hotel & Tourism Management, Rochester, NY

Specialty
- ☐ *First Place:* El Torito Restaurants, (Chubasco cantina menu), Irvine, CA
- ☐ *Second Place:* Willie C's Cafe and Bar (beer list), Wichita, KS
- ☐ *Third Place:* Brigham's, Inc. (kids' menu), Arlington, MA

Greatest Merchandising Power
- ☐ *First Place:* Bobby McGee's U.S.A., Inc., Phoenix, AZ
- ☐ *Second Place:* Chez Piggy, Des Moines, IA
- ☐ *Third Place:* T.G.I. Friday's, Inc., (summer menu), Dallas, TX

Most Imaginative
- ☐ *First Place:* Ginsberg & Wong, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- ☐ *Second Place:* Monterey Bay Canners (wine list), Honolulu, HI
- ☐ *Third Place:* Bleachers, Spirit Lake, IA

Best Design
- ☐ *First Place:* Dalts Grill, Dallas, TX
- ☐ *Second Place:* Chancery, Wauwatusa, WI
- ☐ *Third Place:* Cucina! Cucina! Italian Cafe, Seattle, WA

1989 menu contest judges

- ☐ Bill Aumiller, Aumiller-Youngquist, P.C., Mount Prospect, IL
- ☐ Charles Bernstein, Editor, *Nation's Restaurant News*, New York, NY
- ☐ Ellen Brotman, Ellen I. Brotman Interior Designs, Inc., Fairfax, VA
- ☐ David Farkas, Features Editor, *Restaurant Hospitality* magazine, Cleveland, OH
- ☐ Jane Freiman, Contributing Editor and Restaurant Columnist, *New York Magazine*, New York, NY
- ☐ Robert Kelleter, Food Editor, *The Washington Post*, Washington DC

Milholland, the chain's training director. "But the items didn't really take off until we created the separate 'Health Club' section on our menu."

Besides attracting health-conscious customers, says Milholland, the Health Club offerings appeal to senior citizens and light eaters between 25 and 40 years old.

A restaurant whose menu truly exemplifies the contrast between the heavy foods that so many people secretly enjoy and the healthy foods they know they should be eating is the *Country Club Restaurant*. The Philadelphia landmark, which opened as a diner in the 1950s, has a varied menu that highlights original homestyle signature items with a blue ribbon and nutritionally correct dishes with a heart.

Imagine the battles customers wage with their consciences as they try to decide between homemade cheese blintzes served with heavy sour cream (blue ribbon) and "tuna natural," three ounces of tuna and fresh low-calorie cottage cheese (heart) . . . pot-roasted brisket of beef, served over kasha varnishkas (blue ribbon) and pasta primavera (heart).

In addition, the County Club features a special "diet night" each Tuesday and "diner night" each Wednesday, when appropriate items are featured on a special menu insert. On Tuesday, the featured dishes might include pepper steak made from lean stir-fried beef with green peppers, "herbed filet of ocean flounder" and "savory sauce chicken breast." All calorie counts are listed on diet-night items. On diner night, waitresses dressed in 50s diner outfits serve dishes such as chicken croquettes, swiss steak and the Country Club's original "meatloaf Wellington"—meatloaf wrapped in flaky pastry, covered with Bearnaise sauce.

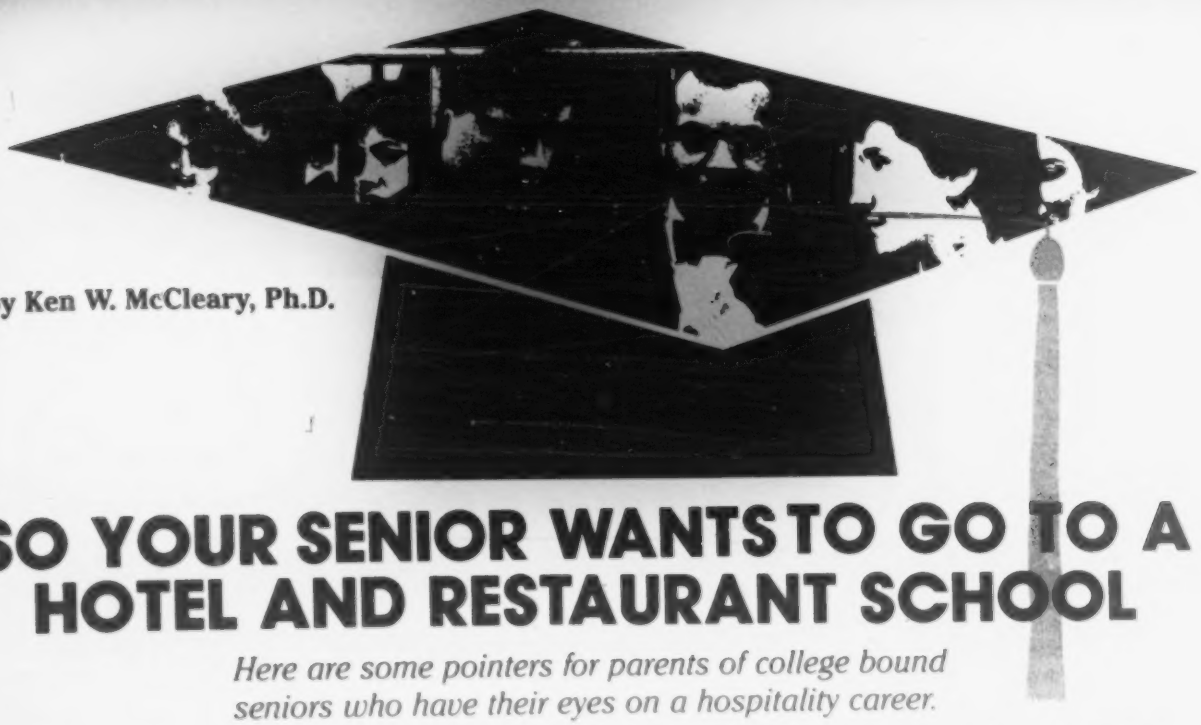
According to general manager Mike Klauder, "The nostalgia craze has brought back an interest in many of our original dishes that we highlight with the blue ribbon, but our heart-healthy menu has brought in new business and also gets lots of interest from our older customers."

Heart-healthy eating at the last bastion of cholesterol

Finally, believe it or not, heart-healthy cuisine has even reached that last bastion of cholesterol—the truck stop. At *Mr. B's* at the Mid-Cal Auto/Truck Plaza, a truck stop in Santa Nella, California, the breakfast, lunch and dinner menu sections each include four "power food" offerings. These selections, prepared according to guidelines established by the American Heart Association, have been on the menu for more than a year and now account for nearly 20 percent of all orders. Dishes include an egg-beater omelette, broiled halibut steak and a baked potato stuffed with unsalted vegetables and light ham, topped with lowfat yogurt and parsley.

A prominently displayed menu note tells the customer that Mr. B's power-food selections are "prepared to fill you up, not out . . . " The power foods for each meal period are set apart in a special section and are designated by a heart being lassoed by a cowboy.

The menu is so successful that Uni-Cal, a leading truck-stop-franchise company, has recommended that all its members add similar selections to their menus. "You'd be amazed how many customers are interested in controlling cholesterol, calories and sodium," says Jackie Day, general manager of Mr. B's. "We had no idea how popular our power-food items would be." ❑



by Ken W. McCleary, Ph.D.

SO YOUR SENIOR WANTS TO GO TO A HOTEL AND RESTAURANT SCHOOL

Here are some pointers for parents of college bound seniors who have their eyes on a hospitality career.

Twenty years ago, the choice of a hotel and restaurant management program was limited to the few dozen schools with such programs. Today, there are more than 125 four-year programs listed in the Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management's (CHRIE) Directory of Hotel and Restaurant Programs. And more programs are being added yearly as colleges and universities recognize the growth opportunities in the service sector. In the state of Michigan, for example, there was only one four-year degree-granting program in 1970. Today, there are five. With the proliferation of programs, how can parents sort through all the options with their college-bound children?

First, identify colleges/universities that meet geographic and programmatic criteria. (The National Restaurant Association, American Hotel and Motel Association, and CHRIE maintain lists of schools.) Then narrow choices to a manageable number of a dozen schools or less. Some guidelines follow.

Gauge the personality mix

All universities have personalities. Some are large and expansive; others, intimate. Some have a reputation for academic excellence; others for nuts-and-bolts technical expertise. By selecting a school that fits the personality of your student, you will facilitate an easier adjustment and increase your student's chances for success.

Consider the student's orientation

Consider your student's desired program orientation and preferred degree (business administration, food science, etc.). Some schools have a targeted focus, such as foodservice or hotel management, while others may include a mix of offerings as well as particular specialties, such as club management, casino management or tourism and convention management. If your student is interested strictly in food preparation, consider a culinary program. I have seen many frustrated chefs struggling through accounting, marketing and law courses in a management-oriented hospitality program.

Locate the program's "home"

Because hotel and restaurant management is not a pure discipline, programs are housed in a variety of subdivisions within universities. You can tell a lot about a program's orientation by locating its "home." For example, programs found in home economics departments are usually food-oriented in nature and provide technical knowledge. Programs found in business schools usually have fewer technical courses and a more management-oriented focus.

Study the curriculum. A good place to start is by requesting a copy of the degree and curriculum requirements from targeted programs. Examine the obvious match of orientation and courses—making sure that a management program contains courses in accounting, finance, personnel and law, for example. Once you have identified schools with promising curricula, take time to evaluate the facility.

Evaluate the faculty

Start by asking for the student/faculty ratio—a good indicator of how much personal attention the student will get. Other things to consider include:

□ **1. Industry experience.** A knowledge of the real world gained through industry experience is essential for adding a "real-life" dimension to education. Some schools encourage professors to maintain currency through consulting activities, visitations or internships. Other institutions use adjunct or part-time faculty extensively. This works out fine as long as there are enough full-time faculty members to take care of the business of education, such as program plan-

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ning and development, counseling and liaison with the rest of the university. Check the number of full-time versus part-time faculty members.

□ **2. Degrees.** Whereas industry experience gives professors real-world perspective, advanced degrees provide the tools to create new techniques and to research problems. Therefore, a substantial proportion of the faculties at top programs will have masters' degrees and doctorates.

□ **3. Research.** For any discipline to advance, it is necessary to conduct research on problems facing that discipline. Much of this research is conducted at universities. One reason for asking whether research is conducted at the school is to ascertain whether students have access to the latest information. The drawback of a strong research orientation may be that professors are away from the classroom and may limit students' access.

□ **4. Publications.** Schools where the faculty has a good publishing record are generally well respected. But if too much emphasis is placed on "publish or perish," faculty may not place enough emphasis on teaching.

Assess the educational atmosphere

Look at general factors that can give you more information about the educational atmosphere. Some key indicators include:

□ **1. Level of competition.** You can get a feel for how competitive a program is by looking at the average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) scores of entering freshmen. There are books in most libraries and bookstores that provide this information for schools throughout the country. Schools where students have high scores usually expect students to be self-motivated and to require little faculty guidance. Students at these schools often stimulate each other's learning.

Schools with lower average scores, on the other hand, often provide a more supportive environment. However, it's possible for different programs within a university to have different average scores. Therefore, it is wise to ask the specific program office what the average scores are for enrolled students.

□ **2. Size.** When assessing size, it is better to ask for the number of graduates each year than to ask for enrollment figures, because programs calculate enrollment in different ways. Then look at your student's needs. For example, larger programs may provide a greater variety of faculty, but smaller programs may provide more individual attention.

□ **3. Internships.** Many programs require students to obtain industry experience, but not all internships are alike. Talk to the administrator of the internship program to determine how internships are secured, supervised and evaluated for college credit.

□ **4. Placement.** Find out the job placement rate for graduates from the last few years. Ask whether the program keeps information on where graduates obtain jobs.

□ **5. Accreditations.** Although hospitality educators have yet to develop their own accreditation standards, programs may be accredited by other agencies. The presence of a specialized accreditation does mean that the program has met certain additional standards deemed important by an association representing a specific field.

Visit the campus

Visit the campuses of the schools that meet most of your criteria. Make sure that the school provides access to appropriate facilities, such as food, preparation labs, kitchens and computers. For example, having a beautiful campus hotel that is not also used as a teaching laboratory doesn't do much to enhance a program. The same could be said for a university that owns lots of computers but severely limits students' access. On the other hand, a program that has few facilities of its own may have easy access to kitchens in dormitories and student centers.

Get a "feel" for the school: talk to program representatives, look at facilities and examine costs and financial aid. Be sure to ask a couple of students about their experiences while you are visiting campus.

Next, seek outside opinions. Don't rely solely on a school's reputation. Just as restaurants and hotels have their ups and downs, so do hospitality programs. The companies that hire graduates from various programs are good sources of information. They can comment on how well prepared graduates were. Go beyond alumni and those directly associated with a program for an unbiased evaluation.

Narrow down your choices

After you have considered the curricula, facilities and educational atmosphere, rank schools in order of how closely they fit your criteria. (Remember that it's unlikely you'll find a perfect match.) Then it's time to apply to those schools.

Finally, make a selection from the schools that accept your student. ❑

Editor's note: Many hotel and restaurant schools are represented on the Show floor. Take the time to visit them if your children are considering a hospitality career.

New CHRIE directory of schools

The Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (CHRIE) is publishing a new directory of its member schools this month, in conjunction with John Wiley and Sons, Inc. of New York. The publication, entitled *The Guide to Hospitality and Tourism Education—A Directory of CHRIE Member Colleges and Universities*, will feature a full page of detailed information about every community college, technical institute, four-year college or university and graduate program that is an institutional member of CHRIE.

The directory will also contain background information about hospitality/tourism education, including a history, growth projections, a discussion of career opportunities and how to go about selecting a program. It will also include a geographical index by state and country.

The Guide to Hospitality and Tourism Education is sold through CHRIE, 1200 Seventeenth St., N.W., Washington DC 20036, for $14.95 plus $2.50 for postage and handling.

#99

Scams, con games and bogus schemes

Although a manager's most precious *organizational* resources are people, the most precious *personal* resource a manager has is *time*. How a manager spends his/her time or, more appropriately perhaps, how he/she "invests" it, determines, in large part, the success that manager will enjoy in reaching organizational objectives. One of the difficulties of managing time, of course, is that it is not exclusively under the control of the manager. Other people and other events affect it.

Over the years I have experienced scams, con games and bogus schemes that impinged on my time; and in conversations with other managers, I've found that they, too, have had similar experiences. Perhaps you'll recognize one or more of the following scenerios.

1. Problem: Your secretary is away from her desk. No one is covering the ringing phone and since it could be that "million-dollar phone call," you answer it. It's a commodities salesman telling you he has a great deal on a cocoa futures contract.

Disposition: You kick yourself for having answered the phone. You tell the salesman that although you are not in a position to "invest" now, you suggest he contact another person who would be anxious to purchase a contract. Then give the salesman the name and number of your local IRS agent.

2. Problem: An unannounced visitor from a fancy-sounding charity you haven't heard of is standing in your lobby and wants to see you. You know you are going to receive a request for a contribution.

Disposition: Go out and meet the visitor (don't have the meeting in your office). Tell the visitor about your aged mother in a nursing home, your sister who is raising seven children on her own and your derelict brother who hasn't done a lick of work in 20 years. Then hold the door open.

3. Problem: You take a call because your secretary states that the caller said he/she was referred to you by someone whom you hold in high regard or who has influence on you, such as a politician, an organizational superior, etc. The caller then relates some tale and winds up asking you to purchase some office supplies at "fire-sale" prices. You now recognize that unless you're careful, you could be hooked into a scam.

Disposition: Let the caller go through the whole spiel, then ask if you can put him or her on hold, so you can check your inventory. Come back a minute later and ask the caller to repeat the spiel. Put him/her on hold again. Come back on the line and tell the caller you have had the call traced and the police are on their way. You will hear an immediate "click." Keep the line "tied up," so it will cost the scam group as much as possible in telephone charges.

4. Problem: You take a call from someone who indicates that your organization is going to receive an award for some reason or other. The caller waxes eloquent about your company, then asks you to secure the award by buying an advertisement in the group's annual dinner program. This now confirms your original suspicion that the caller is a con artist.

Disposition: Tell the caller that your organization is not in a position to take an advertisement, but quickly add that you are president of a vigilante group called "Business Persons Against Fraudulent Schemes," and as a representative of that group, you would love to take an ad in the program. Ask the caller to give you the exact name, address and telephone number of his/her group, so you know exactly where to send the check. Expect to hear an immediate "click."

5. Problem: You receive a letter that indicates your organization has been carefully selected as a high-quality organization and that if you send a specified sum of money, you will receive a plaque and/or window decal that will declare to the world that you are part of this award-winning, exclusive group. (Check for any misspellings in the letter. These letters are usually put together rapidly and crudely.)

Disposition: Write back telling them that you are unworthy of the award or medallion, since the establishment has been closed for the past two years. Ask for the list of criteria used, and if you don't receive it in 10 days, tell them you'll notify the Better Business Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, the news media, the postal authorities, the FBI and the CIA. You won't have to worry about hearing from them again. Ever!

6. Problem: Your secretary says there is a call for you from "officer" somebody from some police force. You take the call (a little nervously), and "officer" somebody says the call is not official, that he is calling to see if you'll make a contribution to one of his activities, such as the patrolmen's picnic. Officer somebody may even precede his request by asking whether everything is OK with the police service you are receiving. (A veiled threat?)

Disposition: Tell officer somebody that the donations/contributions budget has been established for the year, and that one of the reasons you run a successful business is that you don't "go into the budget" during the year. Invite him to send a *written* request for your consideration (not prior approval) at some date that coincides with your planning process. Then tell him that the police service has been great and that you have every reason to believe that it will remain that way.

Fisher's Law #99: Treat business scams, con games and bogus schemes with the contempt and disrespect they truly deserve.

All about appetizers at tableservice restaurants

A new National Restaurant Association Gallup survey takes a look at what's happening with appetizers at both moderately-priced and higher-priced tableservice restaurants. The survey also looks at customers' favorites and provides insights into the demographic profiles of those likely to order different appetizers.

The association's 1989 Gallup study examined how likely consumers would be to order an appetizer for three different occasions—dinner at an expensive tableservice restaurant, dinner at a low-to-moderately-priced tableservice restaurant and lunch at a tableservice restaurant.

Consumers showed the greatest preference for ordering appetizers at dinner, especially at higher-priced tableservice restaurants. Forty percent of respondents said they were likely to select appetizers at a higher-priced establishment, compared to 25 percent who would do so at a low-to-moderately-priced restaurant.

Consumers showed less interest in ordering appetizers for lunch at a tableservice restaurant, with only 15 percent saying they would choose this alternative. In addition, more than six out of 10 respondents stated that they were not at all likely to select appetizers for lunch, compared with four out of 10 consumers at the evening meal.

According to another National Restaurant Association study, *Consumer Restaurant Behavior: A View Based on Occasion Segmentation*, consumers look for "great" appetizers when they dine out for either business/social obligations, a special time out or social fun, and when they want to satisfy some whim or to reward themselves.

In situations where cost is not the primary issue or when spoiling oneself is on the consumer's mind, patrons appear most likely to order appetizers. This would explain the higher proportion of diners saying they are more likely to order appetizers for dinner at expensive restaurants rather than elsewhere. Also, more expensive restaurants are likely to offer a greater variety of appetizers and emphasize them more on their menus than lower-priced establishments.

Favorite restaurant appetizers

Seafood cocktails top the list of appetizer favorites

	Percent of adults	
Appetizer items	**Likely to order**	**Not at all likely to order**
Seafood cocktails	47%	34%
Soup	42	26
Fresh fruit/fruit cup	36	30
Vegetable platter	36	32
Fruit/vegetable juice	35	38
Mexican appetizers	29	46
Cheese appetizers	28	38
Meat appetizers	28	39
Chicken wings/fingers/ kabobs	25	41
Fried vegetables	23	45
Asian appetizers	23	47
Pizza appetizers	21	54
Potato skins	21	53
Pasta appetizers	21	47
Chili	17	58

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey, 1989

More appetizers on the menu

Today's restaurant patrons seem to have a wider variety of appetizers from which to choose. A recent study of menus conducted by the National Restaurant Association* shows that between 1982 and 1988 the number of appetizers on the menus reviewed grew from a total of 410 to 546—a 33 percent increase. Seafood sustained its top position, accounting for 25 percent of all appetizers in both 1982 and 1988.

Although soups, including chili, were the second-most-prevalent appetizers in 1988, their presence declined from 24 percent of the appetizers listed in 1982 to 19 percent in 1988. However, the number of ethnic soups (gazpacho, etc.) grew from 2 percent of all soups to 13 percent during the six-year period.

Like soups, vegetable-based appetizers lost share, falling from 21 percent in 1982 to 16 percent in 1988, but they remained the third-most-available appetizer in 1988. Fried vegetables accounted for most of the vegetable appetizers, followed by potato skins.

Mexican appetizers experienced the largest growth, accounting for 6 percent of appetizers in 1982 and 13 percent in 1988. In 1982 nachos accounted for the majority of Mexican-inspired appetizers. But in 1988 this old standby had been joined by more exotic choices like ceviche, quesadilla and Mexican pizza.

Meat and pasta each accounted for only 4 percent of the appetizers in 1988, but each grew about three percentage points between 1982 and 1988. Only four meat appetizers (less than 1 percent of the total) were on the menus in 1982, but the 1988 menus included a variety of choices. This expansion may reflect the trend toward consumption of smaller portions of meat. Similarly, only two pasta appetizers appeared in 1982, but this number had grown to 22 by 1988.

Cheese appetizers remained relatively stable, representing 4 percent of appetizer items in 1982 and 5 percent in 1988. Fried cheese was the most popular cheese item.

The presence of fruit appetizers and pates declined during the six-year period. In 1982 fruit appetizers accounted for 7 percent of this menu category. By 1988 a fruit appetizer appeared only on one menu. Pates, too, were more available in 1982 (3 percent) than 1988 (1 percent).

**Selected from those submitted to the National Restaurant Association's Great Menu Contest for analysis. Fifty were chosen from the 1982 entrants and 50 from 1988. This analysis of appetizers includes soups.*

Likelihood of ordering appetizers by age group

Younger age groups show a greater preference for appetizers

	Percent likely to order					
	All age groups	18 to 24 yrs.	25 to 34 yrs.	35 to 49 yrs.	50 to 64 yrs.	65+ yrs.
For dinner at an expensive tableservice restaurant	40%	53%	49%	44%	31%	21%
For dinner at a low-to-moderately-priced tableservice restaurant	25	31	33	24	21	15
For lunch at a tableservice restaurant	15	26	13	15	15	10

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey, 1989

Swapping appetizers for entrees?

When asked if they were interested in substituting appetizers for an entree at either lunch or dinner, Gallup survey respondents showed only a moderate interest in this option. Fourteen percent said they were likely to order appetizers in lieu of an entree at dinner, and 11 percent said they would do so at lunch.

About two-thirds of the study participants stated that they were neither likely nor unlikely to swap appetizers for entrees at either lunch or dinner. Women did, however, show slightly greater interest than men in making the substitution.

Favorite appetizers

Survey respondents named seafood cocktails as their favorite appetizer item at restaurants; 47 percent said they were likely to order them. Soup followed closely behind, with 42 percent. Rounding out the list of the top five favorite appetizers were fresh fruit/fruit cup, vegetable platter and fruit/vegetable juice. Interestingly enough, despite the high level of patron interest in these items, soup, vegetables, and fruit appetizers are not showing up as frequently on today's menus as in years past (see sidebar).

Mexican appetizers were also well-liked among survey participants, with 29 percent stating that they were likely to order them. However, a relatively high proportion of consumers (46 percent) said that they were not at all likely to order Mexican appetizers.

Popular with younger diners

Among age groups, 18 to 24-year-olds showed the greatest interest in choosing appetizers for dinner at an expensive tableservice restaurant, with 53 percent responding that they were likely to pursue this option. Almost one out of every two consumers 25 to 34 years of age said they were prone to selecting appetizers. Survey results indicate that as consumers' age increased, the percentage

Who orders the various types of appetizers?

Seafood cocktails (crab, oyster, shrimp, etc.)
- ☐ Both men and women
- ☐ 35 to 49-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes over $30,000
- ☐ Consumers from the East

Soup
- ☐ Women
- ☐ 25 to 34-year-olds and those over 50 years of age
- ☐ Households with annual incomes between $15,000 and $30,000
- ☐ Consumers from the East

Fresh fruit/fruit cup
- ☐ Women
- ☐ 50 to 64-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes between $5,000 and $20,000
- ☐ Consumers from the East and South

Vegetable platter
- ☐ Women
- ☐ 25 to 49-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes between $15,000 and $20,000
- ☐ Consumers throughout the United States

Fruit/vegetable juice
- ☐ Women
- ☐ 50-year-olds and older
- ☐ Households with annual incomes less than $20,000
- ☐ Consumers from the East

Mexican appetizers (tacos, nachos, etc.)
- ☐ Both men and women
- ☐ 18 to 24-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes exceeding $30,000
- ☐ Consumers living in the South and West

Cheese (fried, baked or a platter of assorted cheeses)
- ☐ Women
- ☐ 18 to 34-year-olds
- ☐ Consumers living in the South, Midwest and East

Meat appetizers (ribs, meatballs, kabobs, etc.)
- ☐ Men
- ☐ 18 to 24-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes less than $30,000
- ☐ Consumers living in the Midwest, South and West

Chicken wings/fingers/kabobs
- ☐ Men
- ☐ 18 to 24-year-olds
- ☐ Consumers living in the South, West and East

Fried vegetables
- ☐ Women
- ☐ 25 to 49-year-olds
- ☐ Consumers living in the South, East and West

Asian appetizers (egg rolls, wontons, etc.)
- ☐ Both men and women
- ☐ 18 to 24-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes more than $20,000
- ☐ Consumers living in the West and Midwest

Pizza appetizers
- ☐ Women
- ☐ 18 to 24-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes less than $15,000
- ☐ Consumers living in the West, South and Midwest

Potato skins
- ☐ Both men and women
- ☐ 25 to 49-year-olds
- ☐ Consumers across the United States

Pasta appetizers
- ☐ Both men and women
- ☐ 18 to 24-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes between $20,000 and $30,000
- ☐ Consumers living in the West and East

Chili
- ☐ Men
- ☐ 18 to 34-year-olds
- ☐ Households with annual incomes less than $20,000
- ☐ Consumers living in the Midwest and West

who wished to order appetizers in expensive restaurants declined.

A similar pattern emerged in examining consumer interest in purchasing appetizers at dinner at a low-to-moderately-priced tableservice restaurant. Interest in before-meal treats was greatest among younger adults, with approximately one out of three study participants 18 to 34 years old replying that they were likely to select pre-entree tidbits. As age increased, the proportion of consumers likely to order appetizers declined.

When eating lunch at tableservice restaurants, 18 to 24-year-olds showed by far the greatest preference among age groups for ordering appetizers. One out of four in this age group was likely to go for the pre-entree bite. Among other age groups, no more than 15 percent of adults said they were likely to order appetizers.

A regional bias

When eating dinner at an expensive tableservice restaurant, consumers from the eastern region of the United States showed the greatest preference for ordering appetizers (46 percent) and those from the South showed the least interest (36 percent). Forty-two percent of adults in the West and 39 percent of those in the Midwest said they were inclined to select appetizers.

However, when dining out at dinner at a low-to-moderately-priced establishment, approximately one out of four consumers indicated that he or she would order appetizers. Little difference was evident on a regional basis.

—Sebastian O'Kelly

Beefy appetizers

Restaurateurs can take advantage of the trend to eat smaller portions of meat by adding meat appetizers to their menus. Reduced-sized portions of appetizers may be just enough to satisfy patrons' desire for something meaty. Plus, smaller meat portions provide many of meat's nutritional benefits without hefty doses of calories and fat. Nutritionists agree that small portions of lean red meat are excellent ways to stock up on hard-to-get nutrients like iron, zinc and vitamin B_{12}.

Adding meat to appetizers also can boost check averages that may be sagging due to declining orders for meat entrees. And appetizers offer good experimental opportunities for both chefs and patrons. Chefs can test the reception of new recipes, and patrons can try small portions of unfamiliar foods.

Anthony Hermann, owner of Newport Beach, California's Bouzy Rouge Cafe, reports that his mini lamb "souvlakia" was originally featured as a tapa, but was so popular that he now offers it as an entree as well. He claims that signature items do better in his 90-seat bistro/cafe than run-of-the mill appetizers. "Some feel that the appetizer or tapas concept is passe, but I still believe in it. Appetizers support my wine-by-the glass program, and meat appetizers really help to sell red wines." But he cautions that meat appetizer sales can be seasonal and are more popular in colder weather.

Tom Meyer, corporate chef of Washington DC-based Clydes Restaurant Group, admits to being emotional on the subject of meat appetizers. "They certainly are hard to find. There are a lot of seafood appetizers but not many meat appetizers out there. I think restaurateurs are missing the boat by not marketing them. People are eating less meat, but I don't think they have sworn it off completely. A large plate of meat may not excite them, but a lot of people still want a taste of meat," he says. Meyer has developed a sirloin-and-mozzarella appetizer that has been very well received. "I pocket the mozzarella in the sirloin then wrap it in pancetta or bacon. Then I skewer the bundles, separating them with bay leaves, which gives them a really nice flavor during grilling. I serve the bundles with a roast pepper sauce."

BEEF PINWHEELS

Serves 24

Ingredients:
3 lbs. flank steak
1 oz. pimiento, chopped
¾ oz. parmesan cheese, grated
2 Tbs. parsley, chopped
2 Tbs. Dijon-style mustard
½ tspn. pepper
3 Tbs. vegetable oil
4 cloves garlic, pressed
Salt and pepper as needed

Method:
Mix pimiento, cheese, parsley, mustard and pepper to blend. Spread over one side of steak, dividing equally. Starting from long side, roll each piece tightly, as for a jelly roll. Season outside of meat with salt and pepper.

Place seam side down; cut into 24 slices, ¾ to 1-inch thick. Thread onto bamboo skewers. Mix oil and garlic; brush lightly over pinwheels. Grill or broil to desired doneness. Garnish with additional chopped parsley.

—Beef Industry Council

TEX-MEX MEATBALLS

Yields 20-24 meatballs

Ingredients:
1 lb. ground beef
1 cup dry bread crumbs
3 ozs. onion, chopped fine
1 egg
¼ cup milk
3 ozs. shredded Monterey Jack Cheese*
2 jalapeno chiles*
Salt and pepper to taste

Method:
Mix all ingredients and blend well. Shape into 1¼-inch balls. Place on baking sheet. Bake in 325ºF oven for 15 minutes. *Do not* overcook. Meatballs should be moist and *not charred*. Remove from baking sheet after taking from oven so they will not stick. Store in refrigerator. Serve with tomato salsa.

**Jalapeno Monterey Jack Cheese can be used to replace chile peppers.*

—Pufferbelly, Ltd.

At the 105-seat Pufferbelly restaurant in Berea, Ohio, chef Bob Sutton offers a variety of appetizers, including beef yakitori and mushrooms stuffed with spicy Italian sausage. Many of his customers make a meal of these items. "I don't know whether it's because of taste, health or economic concerns," chef Sutton wonders. But he keeps adding to his selection. Working with a consultant, Sutton developed his Tex-Mex meatballs, a combination of beef, jalapeno peppers, cheese and bread crumbs served on tomato salsa.

—Claire Regan, R.D.

Spotlight on U.S. pleasure travel

The second in a series on travel and tourism, this article focuses on domestic pleasure travel, examining tourist destinations, trip duration, traveler demographics, season of travel and mode of transportation. A closeup look at the booming weekend travel market is also included.

Not long ago, the word "vacation" meant piling the kids into the family station wagon and taking off on a one or two-week trip. Although the stereotypical U.S. family vacation is far from extinct, Americans are planning vacation trips around everything from marathon runs to wine-tasting weekends. And these vacations tend to be shorter and more frequent.

More, shorter trips[1]

One of the most notable trends in pleasure or vacation travel is that the number of trips is increasing while the number of nights spent away from home is decreasing. Preliminary 1988 figures from the U.S. Travel Data Center show that the number of vacation person-trips[2] was up 8.4 percent in 1988. At the same time, the number of vacation person-nights[3] remained flat.

However, the average duration of vacation trips has been consistently declining since 1983, when it was 6.0 nights. In 1988, the average duration was 4.8 nights.

Part of the decline in vacation duration can be attributed to an increase in vacation trips taken over a weekend. According to the U.S. Travel Data Center, weekend vacation trips increased 10.6 percent in 1988 and 30 percent between 1984 and 1988. By comparison, the number of nonweekend vacations—both short and long—increased 15 percent between 1984 and 1988.

Who is the average traveler?

According to the U.S. Travel Data Center 1987 Travel Survey, 57 percent of pleasure travelers were married, and more were women than men—53 percent versus 47 percent.

Three out of four pleasure travelers were between 18 and 54 years of age, with the average traveler being 41 years old. Most pleasure travelers (85 percent) had at least a high school diploma, and 47 percent were employed in professional, managerial, technical, clerical or sales occupations.

[1]*Pleasure trips include, but are not limited to vacation trips. Pleasure trips exclude trips taken for the purposes of business or conventions.*

[2]*A trip is defined as each time one adult travels to any destination at least 100 miles from home (one way) and returns. A person-trip is defined as every time a person goes on a trip. Hence, if three people from one household went together on one trip, it would count as one trip, but three person-trips.*

[3]*A person-night, like a person trip, is one person spending one night away.*

U.S. travel away from home,* 1987–88

Weekend vacation travel showed the most growth between 1987 and 1988

	Millions of 1988 person-trips**	Percent change 1987–1988
Total	1,241	4.2
Visit friends/relatives	426	–2.5
Outdoor recreation/ entertainment	509	9.5
Vacation	840	8.4
All weekend trips	576	3.0
Weekend vacation	420	10.6

** includes both foreign and domestic destinations of U.S. citizens*
*** preliminary*

Source: US Travel Data Center

Different patterns

Since individual lifestyles affect vacation patterns, different types of vacations attract different groups of consumers. According to a recent study of the family vacation travel market by *Better Homes and Gardens*, the largest percentage of two-earner households falls into the weekend traveler segment. Juggling the organization of vacation time may be one of the primary reasons more dual-earner households take weekend rather than long vacations or vacations during the week (see sidebar).

According to a 1986 study by the Marriott Corporation on the leisure

Most travelers go by car

Most travelers drive to a vacation site. According to *Better Homes and Gardens* research, an automobile, a truck or a recreational vehicle was the mode of transportation for at least eight out of 10 family vacation person-trips in each season in 1987-88.

In 1987, the U.S. Travel Data Center estimated that 57 percent of person-trips that were taken by plane lasted four or more nights. In contrast, 54 percent of the person-trips that were taken by car lasted between one and three nights. Similarly, 65 percent of trips 1,000 or more miles long were taken by plane, compared with just 15 percent by car. In comparison, only 22 percent of airline trips were between 200 and 999 miles, compared with 83 percent of car trips.

For those traveling by car, the average trip length was shorter (4.5 nights) than for those traveling by plane (6.9 nights). Those traveling by car also spent fewer nights in the homes of friends and relatives than those traveling by plane. In 1987, the average automobile traveler spent 3.8 nights with friends and family and 3.5 nights at hotels, motels and motor hotels. In 1987, airline travelers spent an average of 6.4 nights with friends and relatives and only 4.6 nights in commercial lodgings.

travel market, senior citizens favored short vacations, and they were more likely to take them during the week than on the weekend.

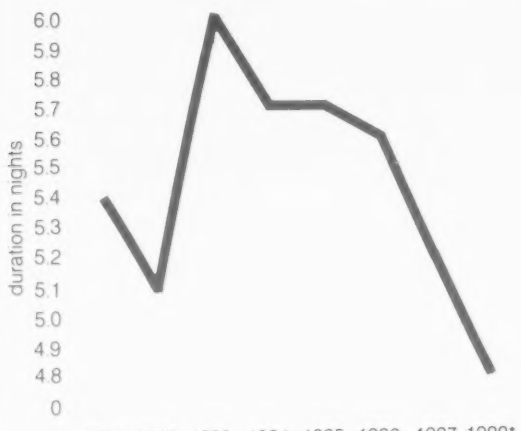
Summer: top season

Regardless of the duration of the trip, summer is still the most popular time for vacations. In 1988, 38 percent of all vacation person-trips were taken in June, July or August, and 73 percent of person-trips taken in these months were for vacations. The largest number of vacation person-trips was taken during July—14 percent of the total in 1988.

The fewest vacation trips were taken during the spring months. Vacation travel in March, April and May accounted for 21 percent of vacation person-trips taken in 1988.

Average length of vacation trips

Vacation duration has declined since 1983



Source: U.S. Travel Data Center **preliminary*

South: most comings and goings

Heading south is not only popular for the winter. The South Atlantic states—Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia—are a popular destination year round; they attracted one of five pleasure trips in 1987.

The South Atlantic states were also the leading region of traveler origin in 1987. Almost two out of 10 vacation travelers in 1987 (18 percent) came from these states. Close behind were residents of the East North Central states—Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin—who represented 16 percent of 1987 vacation travelers.

Although the New England states—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont—were not among the top destinations of pleasure travelers, they are notable for attracting a large number of educated and affluent visitors. In 1987, 41 percent of the travelers to the region had completed college or graduate work, and 46 percent had annual family incomes over $40,000. This compares with 30 percent of all U.S. travelers who had at least a college degree and 32 percent who had a family income exceeding $40,000 a year.

Fewer visits to friends and relatives

Although many of those traveling in the United States stay with their friends and relatives while traveling, visits to these groups is less of a reason for going on a trip than it was in the past. According to the U.S. Travel Data Center, visits to friends and relatives declined 2.5 percent in 1988, after a decline of 1.9 percent in 1987. Those over 55 years of age were most likely to schedule a trip to visit friends or relatives—42 percent.

Meanwhile, the number of trips taken for outdoor recreation and entertainment purposes grew 9.5 percent in 1988. This marked the second consecutive year of high growth. More than four out of 10 travelers between 18 and 54 years of age took trips for this purpose in 1987.

—Nancy Michalski

Closeup

Weekend pleasure travel

According to the U.S. Travel Data Center, roughly half of all vacation trips in 1988 were considered weekend vacations—trips of one to five nights in duration taking place over a weekend but excluding day trips. Weekend travel is particularly attractive to relatively young, affluent individuals. The U.S. Travel Data Center estimated that in 1987, 33 percent of weekend travelers had a family income over $40,000 and 42 percent were between 25 and 44 years of age. Almost four out of five weekend trips (79 percent) were taken without children. In addition, a study performed for *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine showed that 62 percent of weekend trips were taken by members of households with two or more wage earners.

"Getting away"

According to a recent study by the Marriott Corporation on the leisure travel market, one out of five respondents (23 percent) took a weekend vacation trip primarily to get away from it all. "Getting away from it all" was much more prominently mentioned by those with an annual income greater than $20,000, by individuals under 55 years of age and by dual-income households.

"Getting away from it all" doesn't necessarily imply that the weekend trips are inactive. According to Marriott's study, four out of 10 people who go away for a weekend go sightseeing. For those who take weekend trips in the summer, swimming is the second-most-popular activity (36 percent), and skiing is the second most popular winter weekend activity (26 percent).

"Disappointing food"

The Marriott study also indicated that dining out is a popular activity on weekend excursions, no matter when the trip is taken. However, when asked about problems encountered with weekend travel, almost six out of 10 (59 percent) mentioned that they had encountered disappointing food. That number jumps to 71 percent among affluent, educated respondents* or those residing in the West.

**Includes those households with an annual family income between $30,000 and $39,999 in which at least one adult has a college degree, or households earning more than $40,000.*

Hotel restaurant operations data

This special analysis of the National Restaurant Association's 1988 industry operations survey examines operating data for hotel restaurants.

For the first time, restaurant industry operations data compiled by the association's annual survey are now available for restaurants located in or attached to a hotel.

Lower sales but higher checks

According to the association's analysis of the operations survey data, in 1987 hotel restaurants posted per-seat median sales of $2,925. In comparison, all tableservice respondents reported per-seat median sales of $4,453.

Hotel restaurant respondents reported median food sales per seat of $2,656 and median alcoholic-beverage sales of $629 per seat. Food and beverage costs at hotel dining establishments accounted for 35 percent of sales in 1987, the same proportion as for all tableservice participants.

Although hotel restaurants posted lower per-seat median sales than did all tableservice respondents, hotel establishments did report higher average checks—$11 for hotel restaurants, compared to $8 for all tableservice operators.

Controllable expense ratio higher

In 1987 hotel restaurants posted a median profit of $94 per seat, or 3 percent of total sales. In comparison, all tableservice respondents reported a median profit of $213 per seat, or 5 percent of total sales. One important factor in this difference is related to hotel restaurants' controllable expenses.

Controllable expenses are the costs that are most directly influenced by operating policy and management efficiency; they include major expenses, such as salaries and wages, employee benefits and utility costs. For 1987, hotel restaurant participants reported that controllable expenses were 52 percent of total sales, compared to a lower 48 percent for all tableservice participants. Payroll, employee benefits, music and entertainment costs appear to be responsible for this variance.

Hotel restaurant participants posted payroll expenses at 31 percent of sales, benefit costs at 6 percent of sales, and music and entertainment costs at $35 per seat. In contrast, all tableservice restaurant participants reported payroll expenses at 28 percent of sales, benefit costs at 2 percent of sales, and music and entertainment expenses at $21 per seat.

Larger staffs at hotel restaurants

Hotel restaurant respondents reported 34 full-time-equivalent employees in 1987, compared to a lower 26 for all tableservice respondents. Also, hotel dining establishments employed 15 full-time-equivalent workers per 100 average daily covers, versus 11 for all tableservice establishments.

Median total sales per full-time equivalent employee for hotel restaurants in 1987 were $27,574, compared to $28,719 for all tableservice participants.

—Hudson Riehle

Selected income and expenses* for hotel restaurants in 1987

The median restaurant profit was $94 per seat

	Amount per seat	Ratio to sales**
Total sales	$2,925	—
Total cost of sales	987	35%
Gross profit	1,981	65
Total income	2,161	67
Controllable expenses		
Payroll	1,004	31
Employee benefits	134	6
Direct-operating expenses	250	7
Music & entertainment	35	1
Advertising & promotions	42	2
Utilities	159	4
Administrative & general	127	4
Repairs & maintenance	50	2
Total controllable expenses	*1,775*	*52*
Occupation costs		
Rent	190	6
Property taxes	31	1
Other taxes	14	***
Property insurance	54	2
Total occupation costs	*238*	*7*
Income before interest & depreciation	128	5
Interest	62	2
Depreciation	145	3
Restaurant profit	$ 94	3%

*Median values
**All ratios are based as a percentage of total sales.
***Less than one percent

Source: National Restaurant Association *Restaurant Industry Operations Survey, 1988*

Lodging foodservice sales to grow

The National Restaurant Association forecasts that food and drink sales at lodging establishments (which include hotel, motor hotel and motel restaurants) will advance to $13.9 billion in 1989—up 6.7 percent over 1988.

Restaurants in hotels should post sales of $11.8 billion, capturing more than 84 percent of the 1989 lodging foodservice market. This represents a real sales gain of 2.7 percent.

Motel restaurants are forecast to have food and drink sales of $1.3 billion, and motor hotel restaurant sales will grow to $851 million.

Update on upscale restaurants

This article examines the upscale restaurant segment, including traffic, demographics of frequent upscale patrons, consumer-desired amenities, reservations and no-show policies.

As competition grows fiercer in the upscale segment, restaurant operators know that they must differentiate themselves from the competition. Many upscale establishments have therefore begun to offer a variety of amenities to respond to the special needs of patrons. Just what are those needs?

What customers want

A 1988 National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey investigated the needs of upscale patrons. Separate smoking and nonsmoking sections were of interest to more than three out of four tableservice restaurant patrons (78 percent). Other features that were of particular interest to tableservice restaurant patrons included nutritious menu items (76 percent), children's menu items (67 percent) and self-service salad or food bars (71 percent).

In addition, six out of 10 consumers surveyed were interested in on-premises baking, daily menu changes, and seasonal menu features. About half of those questioned expressed interest in display cooking, dessert displays and live entertainment/music.

How have upscale restaurateurs responded to fulfilling these customer desires? The National Restaurant Association Tableservice Operator Survey indicates that many upscale establishments offer these amenities (see chart).

Tableservice restaurant features by per-person dinner check size

Most upscale restaurants offer seasonal menu features

Restaurant features	Restaurants providing features by check size: $15-$24.99	$25 and over
Seasonal menu features	80%	93%
On-premises baking	70	84
On-premises catering	68	66
Daily menu changes	65	67
Children's menu items	60	31
Sections for smokers and nonsmokers	56	54
Dessert display	36	59
Nutritious menu items	33	49
Live entertainment/music	47	44
Display cooking	42	50
Salad/food bar	19	14
Amenities for single diners	25	36

Source: National Restaurant Association Tableservice Operator Survey, 1988

Handling reservations and no-shows

Another amenity that many upscale restaurants offer is reservations. On the basis of the association's *Tableservice Operator Survey*, virtually all upscale restaurants with a per-person check average exceeding $25 (96 percent) and more than three out of four establishments with a per-person check average between $15 and $24.99 (77 percent) accepted dinner reservations.

Moreover, the tableservice survey indicated that at least seven out of 10* restaurants with a per-person check average over $15 took a customer's phone number when accepting reservations, and roughly two out of three accepted reservations only from a member of the dining party. More than half (51 percent with a check average between $15 and $24.99 and 73 percent with a check average over $25) called the patron to confirm reservations. Fewer establishments asked the customer to call and confirm reservations. Taking a customer's credit-card number when accepting reservations was done by just one out of every 10 of the responding upscale tableservice establishments.

One of the inherent risks of accepting reservations is patrons who do not show up, leaving a table empty. According to the association's *1988 Restaurant Industry Operations Report*, the median seat turnover in fullservice establishments with a per-person check average of more than $10 was only 0.9. Thus, if a table is reserved and the patrons do not show up, it is likely that the table will not be used, leading to a loss of revenue.

Even though the cost of no-shows can be high, particularly among upscale establishments, few restaurants have no-show policies. The *Tableservice Operator Survey* found that 76 percent of responding establishments with a per-person check average between $15 and $24.99 and 48 percent of respondents with a per-person check average more than $25 did not have a no-show policy. Among restaurants surveyed that did accept reservations, the most popular policy for controlling no-shows was to hold the reservation for only a specified period of time. One possible way to fight no-shows is to educate patrons that no-shows have a hidden cost that ultimately affects them.

Upscale patron demographics

Who are the most frequent patrons of upscale establishments and how do they make their decision to dine at these restaurants?

According to the association's study, *Dinner Decision Making: A Consumer Attitude Survey*, the decision to dine at an upscale restaurant is made well in advance of going to the establishment. Almost half of the respondents who patronized an upscale eatery (48 percent) said that the decision was made a day or more in advance. By comparison, only 18 percent of those surveyed decided on eating at a fine restaurant less than one hour ahead.

Moreover, there are certain consumer decision scenarios surrounding the decision to eat at an upscale establishment. Association research indicates that nearly six out of 10 respondents perceive dining at an upscale restaurant as providing a good time.

* *based on establishments that accept reservations*

Amenities consumers look for at tableservice restaurants

More than three out of four consumers are interested in separate smoking/non-smoking sections

Amenity	Percent interested in amenity
Separate smoking/non-smoking sections	78%
Nutritious menu items	76
Food or salad bar	71
Children's menu	67
On-premises baking	65
Seasonal menu features	62
Daily menu changes	60
Display cooking	53
Dessert display	52
Live entertainment	48

Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey, 1988

Reservations policy* by per-person dinner check size

Most restaurants take a customer's phone number when accepting reservations

	Restaurants providing features by check size	
Proportion which:	$15-$24.99	$25 and over
Take customer's phone number	70%	86%
Accept reservation from member of dining party only	63	67
Ask customer to call and confirm	24	44
Call patron to confirm	51	73
Take credit card number	13	10

*based on those accepting reservations

Source: National Restaurant Association Tableservice Operator Survey, 1988

Attributes such as food quality, cleanliness, friendly service staff, fresh food/ingredients and the perception that the restaurant was a nice place were considered to be particularly important to this group when choosing a restaurant. An additional one out of five consumers went to an upscale restaurant because it offered "a nice meal out." At upscale establishments, the idea of having an enjoyable evening with good food and good service is more important than speed of service. The study revealed that upscale dinner patrons, on average, spent more than an hour dining at the establishment.

Here are other interesting upscale restaurant patron demographics:

□ Upscale restaurants are most popular with consumers between the ages of 40 and 60, with those whose annual family income exceeds $30,000, with singles, with men, and with those living in metropolitan areas.

□ Upscale restaurant patrons enjoy dining in small groups more than dining alone or in couples. Almost six out of 10 survey respondents (59 percent) patronized an upscale eatery in a party of three or more persons. In comparison, 39 percent of upscale patrons dined with a single companion, and only 2 percent dined alone.

□ Children were not frequent dinner companions at upscale restaurants. Less than one out of four consumers dined at upscale restaurants with children.

—*Nancy Michalski*

How to order the studies

Tableservice Restaurant Trends, 1989 (CS 500)—which includes the Tableservice Operator Study and the National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey—is available to association members for $30 and nonmembers for $60. *Dinner Decision Making: A Consumer Attitude Survey* (CS 450) is available for $25 to association members and $50 to nonmembers. *Restaurant Industry Operations Report, 1988* (CS 958) is available to members for $30 and to nonmembers for $60 plus 10 percent for postage and handling. All orders must be prepaid.

To order, send a check or money order to the National Restaurant Association Publications Department, 1200 Seventeenth Street, N.W., Washington DC 20036. *Note:* Washington DC residents must add 6 percent sales tax to their orders; Illinois residents must add 7 percent; and residents of Chicago must add 8 percent.

Credit-card orders are accepted over the phone for orders over $10. Call the association's Information Service and Library between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time) at 1-800-424-5156 or (202) 331-5900 in Washington.

CREST* upscale-restaurant performance

□ **Customer traffic:** Total upscale traffic declined 1.4 percent in 1988. This compares with a 1.8 percent growth in customer counts at fast food establishments and a 2.4 percent decrease in traffic at midscale eateries. Since 1984, upscale customer counts have remained flat.

Higher-check upscale establishments fared better than moderate-check upscale eateries in 1988, with a 4.5 percent increase in traffic. Moderate-check upscale restaurants posted a 3.4 percent decline in customer counts. On-premises upscale traffic declined 2 percent in 1988, compared with 1987.

However, off-premises upscale traffic grew by 4 percent in 1988, compared with a 13 percent gain in 1987. Significant growth in both carryout (up 6 percent in 1988) and delivery (up 14 percent in 1988) compensated for some of the decline in on-premises traffic.

□ **Segment report:** Italian restaurants showed the highest growth among all upscale restaurants, posting more than a 10 percent increase in customer traffic, largely due to advances in lunch traffic. Mexican restaurants experienced a 5 percent increase in customer traffic, also largely a result of lunch traffic increases. Upscale Asian, seafood, steak and varied-menu restaurants all showed declines in customer traffic in 1988.

**CREST stands for Consumer Reports on Eating Share Trends, a diary survey conducted by one of the NPD marketing and research companies.*

Foodservice Market Measure–March '89

Fewer adults were foodservice patrons on a typical day in March 1989—44 percent—than they were in February, when nearly 51 percent reported that they patronized a restaurant, fast food place, cafeteria or other place where they purchased a meal or snack. (March patronage was more in keeping with what had been reported in the period between June 1988 and January 1989.)

Of particular note is the significant decline in off-premises patronage—from 22 percent of adults in February to 15 percent in March. This decline was largely due to a slip in dinner takeout and delivery patronage.

In contrast, the proportion of adults who ate dinner on premises edged up slightly in March, reaching the highest level since September 1988. Continuing its pattern of sluggish performance, on-premises lunch patronage dipped to its lowest level in the 10-month history of the Market Measure.

Winter demographics

On a typical winter day, 29 percent of adults ate at a restaurant, and 19 percent purchased food to go or for delivery. Overall, 46 percent of adults patronized a restaurant at least once on a typical winter day, similar to the 44 percent who did so in the fall and 45 percent who did so in the summer. Nevertheless, the proportion of adults who purchased more than one meal from a foodservice establishment on a typical day dropped further to 7 percent in the winter months, compared to 10 percent in the fall and 13 percent in the summer.

□ **Sex:** Little change has occurred in patronage by sex; males remain significantly more likely than females to patronize foodservice establishments.

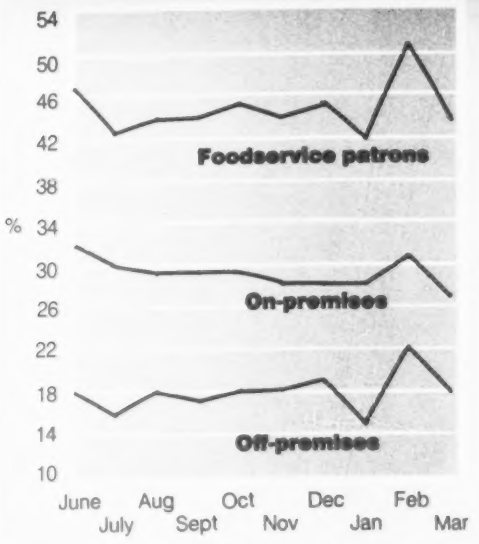
□ **Income:** The new income scale used in winter suggests that after consumers reach an annual income of $30,000, there is little increase in propensity to eat out as income rises.

□ **Age:** Since the summer months, there has been a small increase in patronage by 50 to 64-year-olds as well as by young consumers 18 to 24 years old.

□ **Region:** Almost all the gain in foodservice patronage in the West is due to a significant increase in takeout and delivery. The proportion of adults who purchased takeout food was up from 13 percent in the summer to 19 percent in the winter. Little change is evident in other regions.

—Susan Mills

Percent of adults who were foodservice patrons on a typical day, June 1988–March 1989



Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey

Demographics of eating-out behavior, winter 1989

	Percent of adults who were foodservice patrons		
	Summer 1988	Fall 1988	Winter 1989
Sex			
Male	50%	50%	51%
Female	41	39	42
Annual Income*			
Less than $20,000	—	—	39
$20,000 to $29,999	—	—	48
$30,000 to $39,999	—	—	52
$40,000+	—	—	53
Age			
18 to 24 years old	51	61	58
25 to 34 years old	53	46	52
35 to 49 years old	50	49	48
50 to 64 years old	38	40	43
65 years or older	28	26	28
Region			
East	46	42	44
Midwest	48	46	46
South	43	45	46
West	42	44	49

Notes: *Data refer to a typical day*
Summer = June, July, August
Fall = September, October, November
Winter = December, January, February
**A different income breakdown was used in the summer and fall*
Source: National Restaurant Association Gallup Survey

Foodservice Market Measure

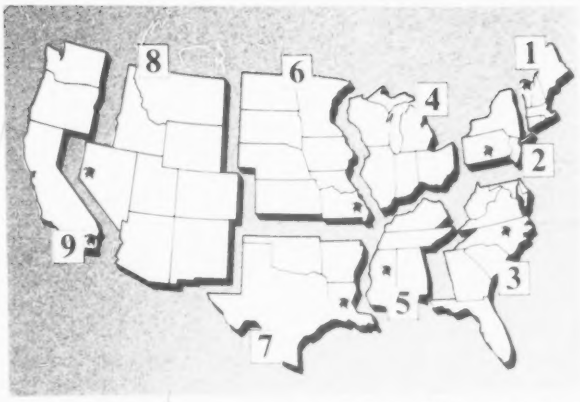
The Foodservice Market Measure is based on 1,000 telephone interviews, conducted by the Gallup Organization each month, with a nationally representative sample of adults age 18 and older. Each person is asked the same questions:

1. Which of the following did you do yesterday?
   □ Ate on the premises of a restaurant, fast food place, cafeteria or any other place where you purchased a meal or snack.
   □ Purchased takeout food "to go" or had it delivered.
2. Was the food you ate on premises yesterday for breakfast, lunch, dinner or a snack?
3. Was the takeout food you purchased or had delivered for breakfast, lunch, dinner or a snack?

The monthly tracking of purchases is supplemented by quarterly inquiries on topics of industry interest.

Here comes the bride

There are as many different kinds of wedding celebrations as there are regional and ethnic differences and budgets. Here's a sample.



1 NEW ENGLAND

Location: Newport, VT
Association members: Chet Greenwood, Barbara Chimileski, Terrence Burdick
Operation: The Landing Restaurant
Profile: Fullservice restaurant on lake
In business: 10 years
Seats: 175-200

The Landing uses its main dining room for private parties, channeling regular customers to the lounge or outside patio. In summer, the restaurant's peak period, wedding parties are limited to afternoons.

Bridal couples come to The Landing from Newport and from Quebec (Canada) townships a few miles across the border. Attracted by the waterfront location, they often have their ceremony on the patio or dock and move inside for the reception. Most opt for a sit-down dinner, with dancing afterward.

Because the dining room's windows overlook such a beautiful lake view, most couples don't want any extra decoration; but if they do, manager **Chet Greenwood** will provide it for them. Greenwood also tries hard to take as much pressure off the bride and groom as possible, even helping with wedding services.

2 MID-ATLANTIC

Location: Middletown, PA
Association members: Alfred Pellegrini, Robin Kauffman
Operation: Alfred's Victorian
Profile: Fullservice restaurant
In business: 20 years
Seats: 132

Alfred's Victorian, housed in an old brownstone, offers wedding parties a touch of nostalgia, thanks to Victorian decor in its three downstairs dining rooms and a livelier Gay-90s atmosphere in its upstairs room. According to manager **Robin Kauffman,** the rooms don't need much further decorating, but fresh flowers from the restaurant's garden add a special touch.

Kauffman customizes a menu for each party. Many couples opt for the Northern Italian dishes for which the restaurant is known. *Stracciatella*—known as The Wedding Soup—is often part of the dinners. As a keepsake, a copy of a special commemorative menu is placed at each setting. It contains the names of the dishes served, the names of the bride and groom, and the wedding date.

4 EAST NORTH CENTRAL

Location: Chicago, IL
Association member: Bobbie Dylo
Operation: Stouffer Hamilton Hotel
Profile: Hotel catering
Seats: Facilities accommodate 10 to 1,000
In business: 8 years

The personality of the catering manager is one of the most important factors in the wedding business. At the Stouffer Hamilton Hotel, catering manager **Bobbie Dylo** treats her clients as if each wedding were the only one on the books. "I believe going that extra mile pays off," she says. Dylo is always at the hotel the day of the functions to be sure everything is moving along smoothly. She has been known to change linens at the last minute and even to move pianos.

She says you never know when a guest at a small affair may be impressed and later return as a client planning a large party. Dylo believes extra touches go a long way toward making customers remember—and recommend—an establishment for a special occasion.

5 EAST SOUTH CENTRAL

Location: Meridian, MS
Association members: Nadine Davis, Johnny Bounds
Operation: Nadine's
Profile: Restaurant and off-premises catering
In business: 3 years

Region 3 Special

Weddings fit for a princess

The bride was lowered from the ceiling in a gold cage, curtains hiding her from view. When the cage came to rest on a raised platform, she stepped out and began her processional . So began a nightlong extravaganza at one wedding held last year at Washington DC's Mayflower Hotel.

The Mayflower handles wedding parties of all sizes, but because of its elegant 7,900-square-foot ballroom with its 21-foot-high ceiling decorated with 23-karat gold leaf, the hotel has particular appeal for those wanting a larger, more elaborate celebration.

In addition to the ballroom, the Mayflower is able to offer gold-rimmed china and goblets—although with goblets costing between $50 and $60 each, the precious ware is not brought out for every occasion. There is also a collection of antique silver, dating back to the early days of the 63-year-old hotel.

Every bridal-party menu at the Mayflower is personalized, based on the tastes of the bride and her family and on what the chef does well. The kitchen is also willing to reproduce a family recipe. Catering manager **Wendy Raab** sometimes arranges for a tasting session to help her clients make their food decisions.

Raab says she's noticed a trend back to traditional basic, simpler foods.

Region 7 Special

Louisiana brides go Cajun or traditional

Chef John Folse already owned a successful restaurant in Donaldsville, Louisiana, when he bought a plantation to cater private parties. White Oak is within the city limits of Baton Rouge, but its 22.8-acre lot provides a bucolic atmosphere. Flowers from the plantation's trees and shrubs are often used as decorations for receptions.

Folse added a ballroom large enough to accommodate 250 people to the plantation's white-pillared, antebellum-style house. Between the ballroom and the rest of the house is a patio containing a brick fountain, an herb garden and two roasting pits for preparing the roast pig so popular in that part of the country.

Although most of the brides prefer a traditional, more formal meal consisting of Louisiana-style cuisine—a marriage of Cajun and Creole foods prepared and served in a European style—some brides opt for the Cajun menu that consists of roast pig accompanied by black pots of jambalaya, shrimp and Cajun-boiled crawfish.

At the other end of the menu continuum, Folse offers the Chef's Table—a seven-course deluxe meal, with each course announced and explained—at a cost of $75 a head.

6 WEST NORTH CENTRAL

Location:
Association members:

Operation:
Profile:
In business: 54 years
Seats:

minute trip from most sections of St. Louis, is one reason for its popularity as a wedding-party site. Another is its large lot, which offers free parking.

Nine party rooms, seating two to 200 people, are decorated to please the bride and her family. For example, the largest room resembles a manor hall, with its cathedral ceiling, large stone gaslit fireplace, Bavarian antique furnishings and wool tapestry rugs. Silk flower arrangements throughout the room make it unnecessary to bring in fresh flowers; usually only the head table will have a fresh-flower centerpiece. And Schneithorst will, at no charge, furnish candles for every table.

Even though the restaurant specializes in German food, most brides prefer traditional American items, such as *Chicken Wellington*—a chicken breast in a pastry crust, served with wild rice and fresh vegetables. The wedding cake comes from an outside bakery, but Schneithorst cuts it and wraps slices for the guests to take home—a St. Louis custom.

Schneithorst parties usually feature an open bar—both before and after the dinner. But **Jackie Biondo,** catering manager, has noticed that guests are drinking much less than formerly, a trend mentioned by other catering managers throughout the country.

8 MOUNTAIN

Location: Sparks, NV
Association members: John Ascuaga, Al Darby, John Carter
Operation: John Ascuaga's Nugget
Profile: Hotel/casino
In business: 31 years
Seats: 20 party rooms

Because there is no waiting time in Nevada, couples come from all over the country to be married in the Silver State. John Ascuaga's caters to these couples and to those from next-door Reno and couples from nearby California cities. Often the out-of-towners bring their guests and their own preacher. They have their wedding ceremony on one side of the room and their reception on the other.

John Carter, catering director, offers a complete wedding package that includes not only the party room and refreshments but also as many extras as the couples choose—entertainment, photography, flowers or additional decorations, and even rooms for those who want to spend the night at the hotel.

The menu choices range from a buffet offering six hot items and six cold items for $10.50 a person, to a six-course gourmet dinner for $35 a person.

9 PACIFIC

Location: San Diego, CA
Association member: Steve Piszkin
Operation: San Diego Marriott La Jolla
Profile: Hotel catering operation
In business: 3 years
Seats: Ballroom plus seven private rooms

In California, wedding receptions are more often "party parties" than sit-down dinners. Marriott San Diego Catering Sales Manager **Steve Piszkin** attributes this to the fact that on the West Coast there is often less family around to request traditions. Still, Piszkin notes that brides and their families can get nervous and anxious. He makes it a point to confer early with the best man about the order of events at the reception, so as not to bother the bride and groom on their special day.

Chicken is the most common entree, because it can be served so many different ways and can be done with a flair.

—Julie Fintel

A byte to eat for hungry "hackers"

Computer junkies have more to feast on than ever before. Dine Out, the first free on-line computer database, provides direct access to information on restaurants and entertainment in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Virginia, Maryland and Delaware. The service has become popular so quickly that Dine Out plans to add

listings for California and the Midwest states soon.

Anyone in the country with a computer and a modem can tap into Dine Out's listings, which are updated daily. The restaurants are cross-referenced for easy access to information, such as price range, location, type of cuisine and ambience. Excerpts from restaurant reviews are often included to help diners make a choice.

Dine Out also features a newsletter for "hungry hackers," restaurant profiles and contests for its users.

—Keith-Block Associates, Inc.

Chefs have heart

When it came time to develop a heart-healthy menu for the Heart of Gold Ball—a fundraiser put on by the Southern Nevada Affiliate of the American Heart Association—Van Atkins, executive chef of Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas (where the event was held), said, "No problem." Atkins was one step ahead. He had already convinced Caesar's' vice president of operations that nutrition should be taught to his culinary staff. Atkins enlisted local dietitian Carolyn Leontos to teach a 30-hour course on nutrition. Developing the menu for the ball became a class project.

The meal, which included a trio of pasta with smoked tomato sauce; a salad of Belgian endive, mache, or "lamb's lettuce," and enoki mushrooms; stuffed tenderloin of beef with port wine sauce; and a fruit fantasy, met the heart association's guidelines.

—Las Vegas Sun

Gator gold

Alligator meat has taken off in a big way down South where the fearsome-looking creatures are raised in abundance. Numerous alligator farms in Florida and Louisiana have been selling alligator meat to restaurants since the early 1980s—after the animal came off the endangered-species list. Recently, alligator steaks, sausages and even gumbos are popping up on menus.

But the real test of the exotic meat's acceptance may have been when the Walt Disney World culinary team took alligator to the culinary "olympics" in Frankfurt, West Germany, last fall. The Disney team used alligator in two of its 13 gold-medal presentations—ground gator tail shaped into a loaf and poached alligator.

—Walt Disney World News and FDA Consumer

War-zone dining

Along Route One, near Quantico Marine Base in Virginia, about 30 miles south of Washington DC, drivers might gawk at a restaurant called The Keep. Military sandbags and "watch out for mine field" signs line the entranceway to the fortress-like structure. A bombed-out military vehicle sits out front and a smashed airplane litters the roof. Enter the world of war-zone dining.

Frank Piwowarski, an ex-army man turned restaurateur, dreamed for years of running a military-theme restaurant. One million dollars later, The Keep is a reality. While dining on specialty dishes such as the bluntly named "A Chunk of Beef," customers are seated in a variety of rooms throughout the restaurant commemorating different wars in American history. The "Vietnam Room," for instance, features bamboo, tropical flowers and a 14-foot mural of people in a field looking through heavy greenery and bamboo.

The biggest parts of the military collection at The Keep are the rooms dedicated to the First and Second World Wars, which include radio equipment and 40mm cannons among their memorabilia. The centerpiece of The Keep, however, is the salad bar, which encircles a World War II weapons carrier. Rumor has it that General George Patton rode in the vehicle in its pre-salad days.

—The Washington Post

Getting no respect

Are you giving your employees the praise and recognition they deserve? If you're not, you might be looking for new workers.

According to a recent survey, a large percentage of employees are unhappy with the amount of recognition their bosses give them. The survey, developed by Motivational Systems, a management development and sales training outfit based in West Orange, New Jersey, asked 1,020 employees: How often does your boss recognize or praise your accomplishments and achievements? Thirty-eight percent responded "rarely or never." Of those 38 percent, two out of three indicated they would quit their jobs to work for companies where they would receive recognition.

—Sanford Teller Communications

Many operators are hiring persons with disabilities.

Disabled persons are very capable of holding responsible, productive jobs. Restaurateurs report (and studies show) that persons with disabilities are easily trained, dependable, follow instructions well and are very productive.

Disabled persons are a large, often overlooked employment resource. There are about 4 million disabled persons who could fill jobs.

There are many financial benefits. The Targeted Job Tax Credit (TJTC) will give an employer of any certified impaired person a 40 percent tax benefit on the first year's salary up to $6,000, and the National Association of Retarded Persons offers job training salary differentials to employers.

Hiring a disabled person is not difficult—there is a lot of help available. Professional counselors from various agencies will help you analyze job requirements, match persons to the job and oversee trainees' progress at no cost.

The National Restaurant Association can help operators find employable persons with disabilities. For information on this program, return the insert card between pages 44 and 45. Or, call the association at 202/331-5900 or 800/424-5156 (toll-free).